
THE MINISTRY *of* DAVID BALDWIN



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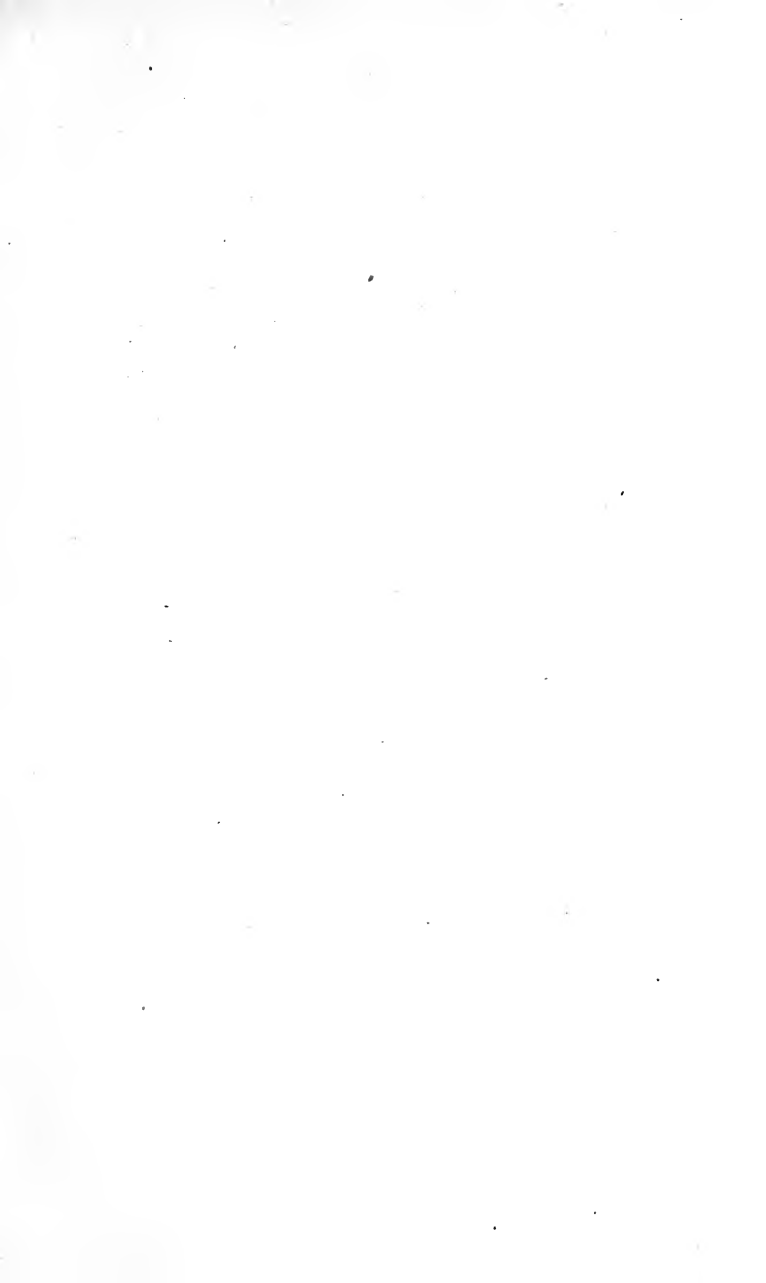


HENRY T. COLESTOCK



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THE MINISTRY
OF
DAVID BALDWIN

A NOVEL

By
HENRY THOMAS COLESTOCK



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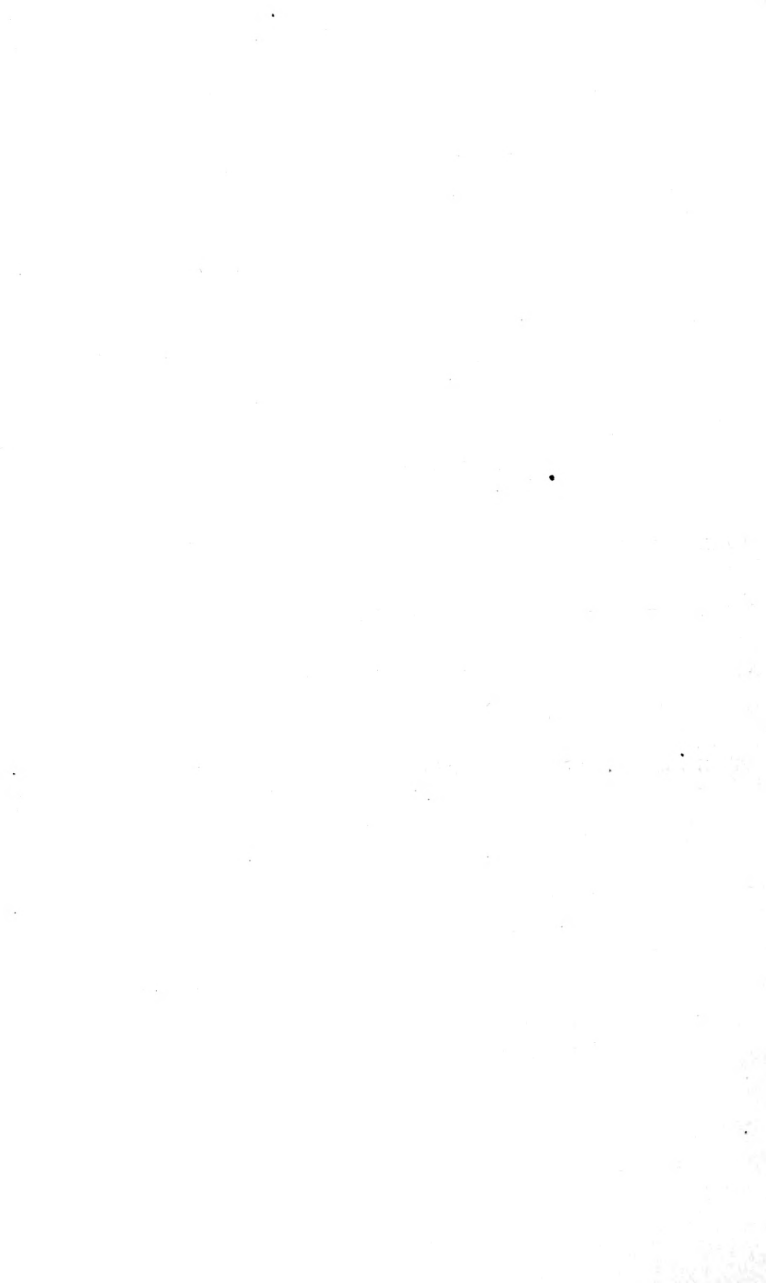
TO MY WIFE

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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THE MINISTRY OF DAVID BALDWIN

I

DAVID BALDWIN sat by his study-table looking over the program of events for the day. On the opposite side of the room sat his chum, Oswald, reading the morning paper. The room was a typical student's den, with bookcases, dictionaries, drop-lamps, sofa-pillows, canes, college colors, class designs, football notices, relics of class victories still cherished with the memories of undergraduate days, a profusion of photographs on the wall, a couple of tennis rackets, together with many other nameless and indescribable articles which go far toward giving a distinctive character to a student's room. One of these articles, an ingenious device for heating water over a gas jet, suggested the possibilities of hot cocoa, and of little informal gatherings in attires wholly unconventional.

David leaned back in his chair, throwing one leg over a corner of his study-table. He looked out of the window over the campus apparently at the stream of human figures beginning to form and which would ebb and flow throughout the

hours of the day. But he did not see these streams of human beings: he was only waiting for the mail.

David had very few regular correspondents, and there was no reason for his expecting a letter from any of them this morning. The truth is, he was not expecting a letter from any one in particular, but was just hoping that the morning's mail would bring him a letter; any letter, even a circular would be better than none at all.

The problem of his future was bearing hard upon David Baldwin this morning. He had no plans for to-morrow; and to-day would close a ten years' course in the schools.

His thoughts swept rapidly over the years of his student life. Seven years ago on his graduation from the academy, it had seemed as if the whole world was waiting for him to put his shoulders under some of its burdens. Indeed, he had felt the world's need calling him so urgently, that it had seemed quite out of the question to go on with his college studies. A smile passed over his face as he thought of the eagerness with which he had then looked out on life. Yes, that graduation from the academy marked the highest point he had ever attained—in his own estimation of himself.

Four years later, at the close of his college course, his graduation had meant very little to him, though he was among the honor men of his class. He was certain that he knew much less

than he did when he left the academy—at least it seemed so to him.

And now, having come to the end of his divinity course, the burden of his own ignorance had increased with the passing of each year.

After all, had it really been wise for him to spend these ten years in study—years of struggle in every sense of the word? Would he not have been better prepared now to go on with his life's work had he spent at least the last half of this period in actual apprenticeship? How much time he had given to the fighting over again of the theological battles of past generations! And how little he really knew of the present struggles of his fellow men in the workaday world!

While filled with a longing to serve his fellow men, David Baldwin was depressed with the consciousness that his world and the one of everyday people were not the same. His education had, to a certain degree, exiled him from the common man. In his thought on religious subjects especially he was conscious of a wide divergence from the opinions and beliefs which possessed him ten years ago. One by one he had battled for his former views; and one by one every religious conception of his pre-college days had been displaced. How well he remembered the anguish of those former days when he was certain he was losing his religion. What a revelation, what a relief when he discovered, at the suggestion of a

friend, that there is a vital distinction between religion and one's beliefs—that beliefs are but explanations of religion which is a life.

“Certainly, a man's religious beliefs are bound to change as he develops intellectually. I see it now. It is as clear as day. Religion is a life. Creeds are but changing explanations of——”

The tread of the postman on the floor below interrupted David's reverie. Click, click resounded the letter receiver as the carrier went from room to room delivering the morning's mail. At some of the rooms he stopped often; at others very seldom. And there was something truly pathetic in the call which was heard occasionally after he had passed some disappointed student's door.

“No mail this morning, James?” The tone would be one of mingled hope and doubt.

“Not this mornin', sir; but perhaps I'll bring ye some this afternoon.” James seemed to understand the heart-hunger which took possession of some of the boys, at times, when letters were slow in coming.

The floor below was finished and the postman was now coming up-stairs. David mentally followed his progress along the hall, stopping at most of the doors, but passing now one, now another. He paused an instant before their door; the click of the letter receiver announced to David and his chum that some mail awaited their attention.

“You're in luck, this morning, old man,” said

Oswald, as he gathered up the mail from the floor.

David picked up the two letters tossed before him. His manner was listless and indifferent. There could be no mistaking the fact: David was blue. He tore open one of them, without noticing its postmark. It was from Williams, a college classmate, containing an invitation to supply his pulpit during the summer. "Mrs. Williams and your namesake have extracted a promise from me to take a little rest this summer," he wrote. "Of course, the youngster didn't do much talking, but I can assure you, he has done his share in making me feel the need of a few weeks' vacation. You know, it is sometimes said that there's nothing like a baby to light up a home. Well, we've experienced the truth of that statement—since our baby came, our house has been lit up—for weeks at a time—*all night*."

"How is everything with you? My three years here are telling,—things are coming my way. I should have written you sooner, but my plans were indefinite until yesterday. But I hope this will reach you before you have made other plans for the summer."

"Thank gracious!" exclaimed Baldwin, turning toward his friend. "At last I've a place to go when this graduating week is past."

Oswald looked up from the letter he was reading—he always received a letter from his sweetheart on Thursdays.

"What did you say?" he asked.

"You didn't hear what I said? Of course you didn't—you were in another realm," glancing at the letter in his hand. "I was saying that at last I have somewhere to go after my graduation. Williams wants me to supply for him during the summer; Mrs. Williams and he and their youngster are going to rusticate on a farm."

"Fortunate fellow!" exclaimed Oswald. "Three years ago he faced the world on the same footing with us."

"And I've been wondering if he did not take the wiser course?" said Baldwin.

"You mean his entering the pastorate at once without waiting for his divinity course?" asked Oswald, glancing at some of the pages where he had discovered the two or three sentences which meant more to him than all the rest of the letter. For he had learned that in love letters, as in unthreshed wheat, not every particle is of the same value.

"Yes: now, he is established in his work while we have not yet entered upon ours; he is a clergyman known throughout his state as a safe and successful pastor, while we are only divinity students without reputation, without experience."

"And encumbered with the suspicion of being doctrinally unsound," added Oswald. "But, old man," said he, "there are those who are hungering for what Williams cannot give. Multitudes of men and women are indifferent to the church to-

day simply because it is repeating a message which it inherited, the underlying conceptions of which mean nothing to the modern man. For my part I prefer ——”

But Baldwin had opened his second letter and was now deep into its contents, quite oblivious to what his roommate was saying.

“Hello!” he exclaimed, jumping to his feet, his face expressing a curious mixture of emotions. “Listen, while I read the queerest letter you ever heard.”

“I’m all ears.”

Baldwin began —

“ ‘Tioga, Minn., June 20, 190—

“ ‘REV. DAVID BALDWIN,

“ ‘*The Divinity School,*

“ ‘*University of the West.*

“ ‘DEAR SIR AND BROTHER:—I am writing you to state that at a recent business meeting of the First Church of this city it was unanimously voted to extend you an invitation to become our pastor——’ ”

“Congratulations, old man!” exclaimed Oswald. “So you call that the queerest ——”

“Just wait! I haven’t come to the queer part yet.”

He continued to read.

“ ‘Owing to the disturbance in our church life caused by the marriage of our former pastor to one of the young ladies of the congregation ——’ ”

"My! but this *is* getting interesting," interrupted Oswald. "But go on; go on."

"——the church voted soon thereafter not to settle another unmarried pastor.'"

Baldwin paused an instant for this sentence to have its full effect on his chum who was slapping his legs and roaring with laughter.

"'In extending to you this invitation,' " the letter continued, "'it is therefore necessary to stipulate that, in the event of your acceptance, you are to come to us a married man.'"

This combination of ideas was too much for Oswald. His laughter passed into a stage beyond his control. He would stop for an instant, then lose himself again. "O Lordy! Lordy!" he cried, using an expression which seemed to be kept in reserve especially for such occasions.

When his friend had calmed down a little, Baldwin read on to the end of the letter.

"'Your visits to us last winter during the illness of our pastor are remembered with much pleasure; and it is the earnest hope of the church to receive your early acceptance. Our salary is not large—we hope to increase it soon. At present we are able to pay a thousand dollars a year. We give our pastor one month's vacation during the summer.

"'There have been some divisions in our church but all parties unite in tendering you this call.

"'By order of the First Church of Tioga, Minn.

"'J. E. STRONG,

"'Chairman of the Standing Committee.'"

"Well," asked Baldwin, "what do you think of it?"

"Think?" repeated Oswald. "Why, I haven't been able to think." Only with great effort could he restrain himself from passing into another fit of laughter. "That church is original or nothing," he added.

"And I scarcely know what to think," said Baldwin, knitting his brow. "It seems as if the world was inviting me to enter all of its lists *at once*."

"If you should want a substitute——" began Oswald.

"Well, suppose I turn the whole matter over to you—what would you do?" asked Baldwin, thrusting his hands into his pockets and facing the other inquiringly.

"What would *I* do?" cried Oswald, pacing about the room. "I'd get out of here at once!—my packing, well, I guess you could take care of that—and in the shortest possible time I'd meet the stipulation of that church. By dad! old man, just turn the whole business over to me and you'll see what I'd do with it!"

"Perhaps," said Baldwin, smiling, "you would not fill the bill—with the church, I mean."

"Of course, there's the rub!" and he drew down the corners of his mouth. "But seriously, how does the whole matter appeal to you?"

"I don't see how I can take it," Baldwin replied somewhat ambiguously. "You know how matters

stand with me. Marriage is quite out of the question for a year and perhaps longer."

"But under the circumstances? With this fine opportunity of settling."

"No, even under the circumstances, I could not arrange it. I have absolutely no choice in the matter but to wait. You know Miss Mathews: she would not think of marrying until she has paid off every cent of her school debt."

"And about half of this remains?—I remember you said something to that effect the other day."

"Yes; you see when Miriam was graduated at Vassar last June she had a school debt of four hundred dollars. One half of this she has worked off this year."

"Good!" exclaimed Oswald. "I fear that is better than you or I could have done."

"And her plan is to continue in her present position for another year,—she has a good position in her home town as stenographer for Brown and Brown."

"I see," said Oswald, "then her debt will be worked off by the end of another year."

"Yes; and I think nothing could dissuade her from meeting every cent of her debt before marrying," said Baldwin, dejectedly. "I know very well what it means when she has once made up her mind to do or not to do a thing," he added, significantly.

"Without doubt," began Oswald, "she will carry out her present plans unless——" and he hesitated.

"Unless what?" interrupted Baldwin eagerly. It had not occurred to him that there could be any possible alternative: Miriam had made her plans and would certainly continue paying off her indebtedness. "Unless what?"

"Unless you can get her to see," continued Oswald, "that it is to your advantage for her to do otherwise."

"What do you mean?" asked Baldwin, in surprise. "I am sure it's something profound, but I cannot quite grasp it."

"Why I mean just this: a woman will do anything for the man she loves when she sees that it is plainly for his advantage. No, this is not an original contribution to knowledge," he added, laughing; "I read it somewhere."

Baldwin was silent. In his mind a new idea was struggling into form. The lines about his mouth tightened; his brow gathered, bringing into sight deep furrows. He looked hard at something on the rug just in front of him. Slowly his intense expression grew relaxed; the look in his eye changed from one of doubt to one of hope; his face became suffused with emotion. The transformation was little short of marvelous! A moment ago, dejection, indifference possessed him; now, a strange hopeful eagerness lit up his countenance, energizing his whole body.

"Oswald, old man, I believe you are right!" he exclaimed. "You have struck one shackle from my bondage. But I am still fettered by an-

other. Leave not thy work half undone!" he pleaded, in a mock heroic tone.

"Show me, O my half unshackled friend, wherein thy bondage lies, and trust my skill to cleave the knot!" said Oswald.

"You have opened my slow eyes to see that Miriam may change her plans,—that a woman will do anything for the man she loves, when that act is for his advantage. Now, that I've stated the idea, it seems as self-evident as, as—an axiom in geometry. But my present difficulty is to—to see clearly how I am to——" and Baldwin hesitated.

"To make her see that this is really to your advantage—this changing of her plans about marrying before meeting the remainder of her school debt?" interpreted Oswald.

"Yes; that's it. How am I to make her see the advantage? I have little faith in my own persuasive powers when Miriam is the one to be moved."

"My boy," said Oswald, "there is an adage, born doubtless of such occasions as this, which says, 'Love will find a way.'"

"You're right! I believe it will!" exclaimed Baldwin. "I'm free—both shackles gone!" There was confidence in his tone. "Old man, I am living in a different world from the one in which I existed when the postman came."

Drawing paper to him, Baldwin at once began to write as follows:

*"Room 175, Divinity Hall,
"University of the West,
"June 21, 190—*

"MR. J. E. STRONG,
"Chairman Standing Committee,
"First Church, Tioga, Minn.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—I am replying to your esteemed favor of yesterday. After prayerful consideration ——"

David stopped. Surely that phrase "prayerful consideration" sounded all right. Yes, it was conventional, what the church would expect him to use. Still his pen hesitated. "No," said he, "I will not use it; I'll be honest. God helping me, I will begin and end my relations with this church in candor and fidelity to the truth!" He began the letter on a new sheet.

"I am replying to your esteemed favor of yesterday in which you do me the honor of inviting me, in behalf of your church, to become your pastor.

"I have considered your invitation and also the stipulation accompanying the same.

"To know that you still remember my visits of last winter affords me much pleasure. In view of the impression I gained of your church life and activity while among you then, I too have a 'condition' which I wish to offer for the church to consider, and my reply to your invitation will be determined, in part at least, by your answer to the following question: Will the church vote to adopt what may be termed in general a modern aggressive policy?

“My answer to your invitation, in view of the unusual condition imposed upon me, cannot be given at once. I would therefore request that two months be given me ; at the end of which time I will be able to state whether or not I can meet your stipulated condition.

“Thanking you for the honor of this invitation, I am,

“Respectfully yours,

“DAVID BALDWIN.”

II

DAVID BALDWIN'S call to the pastorate of the First Church of Tioga was the result of a peculiar combination of circumstances.

It will be necessary for us to go back, in point of time, to a memorable business meeting of the church, several weeks earlier.

Mr. Brand and Deacon Long, two of the most prominent members of the church, were in earnest consultation at the farther end of the lecture room.

"Even if several more on the other side do come in later, we have already more than enough to defeat the election," said the deacon, in a low tone.

"But it's always best to be on the safe side," replied Mr. Brand, in the same low tone. "I was expecting Driver to work up his side a little stronger than he has, apparently."

"And it takes a three-fourths vote, too, for the election of a pastor. Amos Driver will wish he'd never had that clause inserted in the by-laws." Deacon Long's usually serious face relaxed, not into a smile, but into the semblance of one.

"Yes," observed Mr. Brand, "it's the old situation of the calf and the rope over again. Though I fought that clause when Driver proposed it, it will serve our purpose and not his to-night."

"There are few things you haven't fought when Amos Driver wanted them, I guess," said the deacon.

"But there is no sense in letting one man run a church," replied Mr. Brand, stroking his beard. "You know, deacon, how it was before I came here."

"Amos Driver certainly had things pretty much his own way," acknowledged the deacon.

"Just because he's got more money than any of the rest of us, I don't propose that Driver shall dictate the policy of this church—not so long as I am a member of it."

"I am sure Amos Driver don't feel that way," said the deacon, now taking the part of his neighbor. "It's just his way. It's as much his nature as breathing, to want things to go according to his own notion. But, as I have often said to my wife, we're not responsible for what's born in us; it's a part of our fallen depravity."

"But think how he opposed us in that business meeting four weeks ago to-night! And all because the meeting hadn't been announced from the pulpit the preceding Sunday! It was a disgrace to what length Driver carried things that night. But it's a long lane which has no turn," said Mr. Brand, nodding his head significantly.

"But the by-laws were on his side as you were forced to admit," said the deacon, again championing his friend.

"Well, the by-laws are on my side to-night," rejoined Mr. Brand.

Just then Amos Driver, watch in hand, approached the Sunday-school superintendent. "This meeting was announced to open at eight-thirty," said he, consulting his watch. "And it's past that time now." His tone was sharp and abrupt.

"Perhaps you are a few seconds fast, Brother Driver," replied the superintendent, good-naturedly, as he consulted his own watch. In the absence of a pastor, it was his duty to preside at the business meetings of the church.

"The brethren will please come to order," said he. In the superintendent's vocabulary "brethren" was undoubtedly a generic term including the sisters also; for there were fully five times as many women as men before him.

The hum of voices gradually ceased as the little groups breaking up now settled down into the straight-backed, hard-bottomed chairs, in which one could approach a comfortable position only by putting one's feet up on the rounds of the chair in front. Was it because the chairs were so uncomfortable that so many of the members seemed to enjoy the ten minutes' social chat, while they stood up and talked to one another, more than they did the hour in which they sat down and talked to the Lord?

Mr. Brand and Deacon Long reluctantly stopped their conversation and were the last to

take their seats. The chairman waited a moment for them to get settled, then cleared his throat and began.

“Brethren, there is some important business to come before us this evening, the nature of which was indicated in the notice given from the pulpit last Sunday. Will the clerk please read that notice now?”

A young man, whose expression revealed the beginnings of reflective habits, arose from the side of a dark-haired young lady in the audience, came forward to a little table near the chairman, and read the following notice :

“In accordance with the requirements of section 4, article 6, of the by-laws of this church and society, notice is hereby given of a special business meeting of this church and society at the close of the prayer-meeting of this week, to consider the calling of a pastor.

“By order of the Standing Committee,
“J. E. STRONG, *Chairman*.
“PAUL GREEN, *Clerk*.”

As the clerk read the words “section 4, article 6,” Cora Stewart gave her sister Mary a vigorous nudge with her elbow. Mary, who carried enough gravity for the whole family, as her mother had often said, turned and gave her sister a look of dignified rebuke, though she afterward acknowledged she didn’t mean anything by it. The Stone girls—there were six of them, and all were present this evening, though at the usual mid-

week service three attended one week and three the next—exchanged knowing looks and entered into elbow communications. Miss Adams did not smile. She always took the business meetings very seriously.

But of "section 4, article 6," we shall learn more later.

As the clerk sat down, the chairman, looking over the audience, said,

"Brethren, what is your pleasure?"

The eyes of the congregation were turned on Amos Driver and Mr. Brand. All knew that the meeting lay in the hands of these two men, sitting on opposite sides on the front row of chairs.

"Mr. Chairman," said Amos Driver, taking the floor, "as the notice of this meeting was duly given out from the pulpit on the Sunday preceding this meeting, we are legally convened in business capacity according to the by-laws of this church and society. You all know," he continued, "that I am hostile to any attempt to transact the business of this church in meetings not legally convened according to section 4, article 6, of our by-laws," making an emphatic gesture with his head and looking in the direction of Mr. Brand. "But being now legally called together for the consideration of such business, and only such business, as was named in the announcement of this meeting, I move that we at once proceed to cast an informal ballot."

"I second the motion," said Mr. Brand.

The informal ballot was taken, a young instructor in the University and a young lawyer, acting as tellers.

"Mr. Chairman," said the clerk, "the result of the ballot stands as follows: of the sixty votes cast, twenty-nine are for Dr. Thompson, and thirty-one, for Rev. John Upham."

A painful silence, some of the members almost holding their breath, ensued. All felt that the contest was on, and that the present silence was but a calm before the storm.

There were present at this mid-week service more than twice the usual attendance. As this always happened when a business meeting was announced to follow the prayer service, we cannot help wondering whether this increased attendance indicated that the members cared more for the business interests of the church than they did for the opportunity the church afforded for the cultivation of the spiritual life. But it would hardly do to draw such a conclusion, else we might unwittingly carry our reasoning one step further and say that those who absented themselves from all forms of the mid-week service, were interested in neither the business nor the spiritual affairs of the organization to which they belonged! Into what absurd conclusions logic sometimes takes us!

But the business meetings of this church had attained for themselves a reputation of being interesting. Indeed, Cora Stewart was known to have said she had rather attend a church business

meeting than to go to a circus. Such a remark was promptly frowned upon by her elder sister Mary, who sagely observed that the truth should not always be spoken, that sometimes it did not sound reverent. At this her sister only laughed.

Nevertheless, these business meetings did frequently pass into a stage in which the word "interesting" was altogether too mild a term to present an adequate description of them. And the reason for all this lay, for the most part, in the peculiar quality of human nature embodied in our two friends, Amos Driver and Sylvester Brand.

These two men each had a reputation for being decidedly set in his ways and opinions. In their church relations both were active and faithful members, discharging their duties, as each saw them, with far more than the usual zeal. In fact the loss of either of these members would have been a severe blow to the church.

In the business meetings of the church, however, it was positively certain that some disagreement would always arise between them. Perhaps this should be accounted for largely by the fact of their very dissimilar temperaments. Deacon Long, however, always found an adequate explanation for the disagreement by saying that they were born that way, and that they couldn't help it: it was a part of their fallen depravity.

Amos Driver waited until the formal ballot was taken, and the result, the same as that of the informal ballot, was announced by the clerk. Then

he arose, walked very deliberately into the open space in front of the audience near the chairman's desk, and stood facing the rest of the members. His tall figure, held in perfect poise, gave little evidence of his seventy years; from his eyes flashed something of the old fire with which, in his younger days, in committee meetings and on the floor of the lower House, he had thrown into confusion many a political opponent.

"Mr. Chairman," said he, with a slight inclination of his head toward the chair, but without removing his eyes from the audience, "Mr. Chairman, I rise to denounce a conspiracy." The tone in which these words were uttered was charged with ill concealed anger.

The lecture-room was becoming transformed into an arena; the contest was now beginning. Sister Wood sat with her head bowed in silent prayer. For over forty years she had been going through these business meetings and well she knew the indications of the coming outburst.

"We have met here this evening," continued Amos Driver, "legally convened together according to our by-laws to consider the calling of a pastor. And now, because of my opposition to Brother Brand's desire to transact the business of this church in a meeting not legally convened, as he would have done four weeks ago but for me, he has now hatched a conspiracy, yes, I said hatched, hatched, Brother Brand, you have hatched a miserable, contemptible conspiracy in order to

defeat the election of Dr. Thompson to the pastorate of this church.

"Now, I'm not going to say anything against Brother Brand,—you all know I love Brother Brand and that he loves me, and that he is one of the most useful men in our church and we couldn't get along without him—yet he has his faults like the rest of us ; and one of them is that he always wants his own way.

"As I was saying, we are legally convened together to elect a pastor. I came here this evening expecting a unanimous vote for Dr. Thompson. Every one I have spoken to was heartily in his favor. Imagine my consternation, yes, consternation, when the clerk announced thirty-one votes for the Rev. John Upham ! Why, up to that minute I had not even so much as heard that any one wanted the Rev. John Upham to be pastor of this church ! And I do not believe that Brother Brand wants him ; I do not believe that any of you who were influenced by Brother Brand to vote for him, really desire the Rev. John Upham to be pastor of this church. It's nothing but a conspiracy, a rank conspiracy, to defeat the election of a gentleman, whom many of us would be ——"

"I rise to a point of order," said Mr. Palmer, the young lawyer, interrupting Mr. Driver.

"State your point," said the chairman.

"There is no motion before us," said he.

"The point is sustained," said the chairman, looking from Mr. Brand to Amos Driver, who still

held the floor. "If the brethren wish to speak further, we must first have a motion before us."

"I move we adjourn," said Sister Wood.

"Second the motion," said the Sister Allen, nervously. "I shall have one of my terrible headaches if I stay here much longer," she added in an undertone to Miss North, who sat near her.

"Let us vote it down," said Cora Stewart to the row of Stone girls. "Why, the fun's just begun!"

"All in favor of the motion, please stand," said the chairman. About fifteen ladies stood. The motion was lost.

"Mr. Chairman,"—all eyes were turned toward Mr. Brand—"in order to bring the matter before us, I move that we ballot for Dr. Thompson."

"Second the motion," said Deacon Long.

"Now, brethren," said the chairman, "there is a motion before us: are there any further remarks?"

"Mr. Chairman."

"Brother Brand," said the chairman, acknowledging the speaker.

"Mr. Chairman," Mr. Brand continued, very calmly, as if stating a matter wholly impersonal, "I have the honor to be called a conspirator. I suppose this is owing to the fact that I differ from Brother Driver. I am here to state that not myself alone but at least thirty other members now present, are not so favorably disposed toward calling Dr. Thompson to the pastorate of this church as you are, Brother Driver.

"For myself, and I speak for others, I am op-

posed to the election of Dr. Thompson for several good reasons. In the first place, Dr. Thompson is too old a man for the pastorate of our church. Here in this University town we need a young man, one who can attract the students. Why, there are more than one hundred students of our denomination in the University, scarcely ten of whom attend our church. Do we not owe it to the denomination to do all we can for the boys and girls who come here from all over the state? Do we not then need a young pastor, one in the closest sympathy with the young people?

"Further, I am opposed to the election of Dr. Thompson because he is not in favor of church suppers. I had a talk with him on this subject and he expressed himself to me very freely. Of course I did not tell him which side of the question I was on. Why, we have the finest kitchen and arrangements for giving suppers of any church in this city. Last year the Ladies' Aid Society netted three hundred dollars from these suppers—a convenient source of revenue as many of us can appreciate. No, sir; I'm not in favor of calling any man to the pastorate of this church who expresses himself on this subject as Dr. Thompson did in my presence."

"If Brother Brand had as many dishes to wash every day as we have at our house," said one of the Stone sisters in an undertone to Miss Irving, "he wouldn't be so fond of church suppers."

"Nor if he had to do the begging that I do

every time," replied Miss Irving quickly. Miss Irving always had a generous share of this kind of "church work" laid upon her unwilling shoulders.

"You always have such good luck—people can't refuse you, you know," the president of the Ladies' Aid Society had said. And there was truth in the remark—people just couldn't refuse Miss Irving.

Meanwhile, during this conversation in the rear of the house, Mr. Brand was gliding gracefully into his third objection to poor Dr. Thompson. (Let us hope his ears did not burn!)

"Neither can we, as one of the smaller churches of the city," said he, "afford to ignore, in our consideration of this subject, a fact which I would fain leave unmentioned—Dr. Thompson has a very large family—an unusually large family even for a pastor, and on the moderate salary we can afford to pay, he could not live in that part of the city where we would like to have our pastor reside—rents are too high. He would need too large a house. And the social standing of the churches of this city is gauged more than we care to admit by the residence of the pastor. If our church is ever to rise, socially, we must see to it that our pastor rents a house in a desirable quarter of the city. I am not in favor of Dr. Thompson because in his case this would be out of the question,—his family is too large; with all of his other expenses he could not afford it.

"And," continued Mr. Brand, pursuing his subject mercilessly, but hesitating as if loath to continue in the performance of an unwelcome duty ; "I have heard more than one member of this church state that she did not like Dr. Thompson's appearance in the pulpit. One lady said to me, 'Dr. Thompson is too thick and too short ; he looks too much like a butcher.' This remark, I grant, may be carrying a criticism too far ; but one cannot get around it—Dr. Thompson does lack a pleasing appearance in the pulpit. Of course, it makes little difference to me, personally ; but in attracting strangers to our church we must have a preacher of pleasing manners and pulpit appearance.

"As I said, these things have little weight with me ; but in our consideration of such an important subject as the calling of a pastor, we should keep in mind that we are not acting for ourselves alone. Every church exists to minister to the needs of the community. And there are any number of people in every cultured community who do not enjoy looking at a preacher whose over-studious life has robbed him of the greater part of his hair. The fact that Dr. Thompson is bald cannot but make him less attractive, and unfortunately, less desirable as a pastor.

"Now, while I have no desire to question Dr. Thompson's ability to guide his own affairs, I happen to have heard something about his eldest son which I do not care to repeat in this presence.

Young men, of course, will be young men, whether in a preacher's family or anywhere else. But it is especially unfortunate," here the speaker's voice was lowered to a confidential tone, "when any member of a clergyman's family so acts that the father feels his own usefulness at an end where he is now living. It is possible, however, that Dr. Thompson has other motives for wishing to leave his present pastorate. But this probable one should not be passed over lightly by us.

"Further, in calling a pastor, are we not also bound to consider the fitness of the pastor's wife? Is it not a matter of common observation that in the ministry the pastor's wife often counts for more than the pastor himself? I am sure that many of us have known personally of such instances. Is it well, then, for us seriously to think of calling to the pastorate of this church a clergyman whose wife is almost, if not quite, an invalid? Invalidism doubtless brings in its train many high and holy compensations; but it unquestionably unfits a clergyman's wife for taking that social leadership of which we, as a church, now stand so much in need.

"So far as Dr. Thompson's scholarship is concerned," continued Brother Brand, suavely, "it is true he is all that any church could reasonably desire; nevertheless, in view of what I have said, he certainly is not the man for the pastorate of this church. He is too far advanced in years, his personal appearance is against him, his family is too

large, one of his sons is in bad repute where they are now living, his wife is practically an invalid and he is not in favor of church suppers—he told me so himself. For these reasons, and others which might be mentioned, Mr. Chairman, I am opposed to calling Dr. Thompson to the pastorate of our church.”

Mr. Brand, glowing with the feeling of triumph, sat down. Of course, what he had said was in behalf of the welfare of the church ; yet there was undeniably a certain personal gratification in getting the better of the man who had worsted him four weeks ago. Dr. Thompson was Amos Driver's candidate, and to show the reasons why Driver's candidate should not be the choice of the church, was a rare morsel to Brand, one which he had rolled over and over again under his tongue. But his opponent was not to be silenced by one broadside.

Instantly Driver was on his feet, pointing his long index finger directly at Brand, and piercing him with the steady look of his steel gray eyes.

“Sylvester Brand !” Driver always called Brand by his Christian name when the discussion had passed to an exasperating stage. “Sylvester Brand !” said he, shaking his long finger at his opponent, “you ought to be the last man on earth to find fault with another man's looks ! But I did not start out to make a speech on good looks, nor do I need to say anything of Brand's beauty : a mere allusion to the subject is sufficient. But I will

say, people who live in glass houses should be careful how they throw stones ; yes, Brother Brand, they should be very careful how they throw stones. It passes my understanding, the facts being as they are, how any man utterly devoid of good looks can find fault with the appearance of Dr. Thompson.

“And as for Dr. Thompson’s large family, of which Brother Brand has spoken so solicitously, fearing lest this would detract from some fancied advantage to the church, I say that this whole matter is none of our business, neither mine nor Sylvester Brand’s. If Dr. Thompson is blessed with a large family, shall we, a body of Christian men and women, think him unfit to preach the Gospel to us because he has obeyed the divine injunction to be fruitful and multiply? Would you have a celibate ministry? Would you dictate to a clergyman how many children he may have in order to be acceptable to a congregation? Why, Sylvester Brand, you had better become a Catholic at once. But personal independence is a principle of our denomination ; and as long as it so remains, you, Sylvester Brand, have no call to intrude, yes, I say intrude, on the family affairs of the ministry.

“As the members of this church know very well, I, too, am hostile,” continued Driver using a word which he had frequent occasion to employ in the business meetings of the church ; “I, too, am hostile to church suppers. I always have been and

I always will be. Every time I see a lot of women here a-working themselves sick when they ought to be in their own homes, many of them attending to their own children, I say to myself: what a lot of geese—I beg the pardon of the ladies—what a lot of geese for letting Sylvester Brand get them into such unprofitable nonsense! For if there is anything that does not pay, it's certainly church suppers. And I'm in favor of Dr. Thompson for his sensible Christian views on that subject."

Miss Irving nodded her head approvingly.

"That's just what I've said many and many a time," she whispered to Miss Adams. "Brother Driver is right: the suppers don't pay. If we didn't beg our supplies we'd ——"

"Lots of fun! these business meetings, aren't they?" whispered Cora Stewart interrupting Miss Irving.

"I can't see where the 'fun' comes in," said staid Miss Appleton. "I think the way these two men carry on is just horrid!"

"And I say so, too!" quickly observed Miss Fenwick. "There's nothing Christian about it."

While these and other opinions were being exchanged on the back seats, Amos Driver continued to address himself to the audience in general but specifically to Mr. Brand.

"The main thing we want in a pastor is sense, good horse sense,"—rising a little on his toes and giving an emphatic gesture with his whole body—"and Dr. Thompson has sense; he's a man of

ripe experience—and as for being too old, why he's not a day over fifty-five, just in his prime. Dr. Thompson is just about your own age, Sylvester Brand, and you're one of the most energetic men in this city. It's all nonsense, this wanting a younger man. Why, we have just had a young pastor, a young unmarried man, and see what a disturbance he caused in this church! There was no rest nor peace until he got married. I never could understand why unmarried ministers should cause so much disturbance in a church! But they always do. Of the twenty-four pastors we've had since I've been a member of this church, which will be fifty-three years come next October, four were single men; and it's been the same in every case—more or less disturbance in the congregation.

“No, sir; I'm not in favor of calling a young man. Why, the young ministers of to-day don't know what they believe. Not that I'm narrow or think an opinion is always right simply because it has been held in the past; for there are some of the old doctrines which I myself do not accept, especially the Calvinistic doctrine of Election. Yet, I want a pastor who has settled down to a few plain, sensible convictions—just such a man as Dr. Thompson.

“Sylvester Brand!” the old gentleman's eyes flashed as he lifted his long index finger and pointed it at the person addressed, “I charge you with deliberately conspiring to defeat the election

of Dr. Thompson to the pastorate of this church ! Your objections to him are nonsense, sheer nonsense ! It passes my understanding how a Christian man of your parts, with the judgment you ordinarily manifest, can act so stupidly, can be so utterly devoid of sense when it comes to the business affairs of the church. I have known few men, Sylvester Brand, more obstinate. You are always opposing something which the rest of us want. One would think that you felt called on to run this church according to the notion of Sylvester Brand ! That kitchen and the rest of this eating tomfoolery we have to thank you for. And it's a curse to the church ; yes, sir, a curse to the church !

“ And to think that this church is defeated in its desire to call Dr. Thompson, just because of your unchristian opposition ! I suppose you think you are serving the Lord by opposing Dr. Thompson's election. But let me tell you, Sylvester Brand, according to my light, you're doing no such thing ; you're bent on getting even with me for not letting you go on with *your* meeting four weeks ago. But you needn't think because you've got the best of me to-night that I'm going to step aside and let *you* run this church. I've been a member here too long—fifty-three years come next October,—I've contributed five times, yes ten times as much to this church as you ever have. And yet you seem to think because you're twenty years younger than I am, you know what is best for the good of

this church. Doubtless you are the people, Sylvester Brand, and wisdom will die with you."

A torrent of heated words was rushing to the old gentleman's lips as he sat down, thoroughly carried away by the rising tide of his ungovernable passion. His breath came quick and labored; his eyes flashed; his whole frame quivered with rage. Standing, he was an object for admiration—a fountain from which an irresistible stream of energy flowed forth. But as soon as he sat down, he became an object of pity. Poor Amos Driver! for the next two weeks you will have to wrestle in your wilderness, with your legions of devils, chief among which will be sleeplessness and indigestion.

Fortunately, Mrs. Driver was not present at the meeting. She was a cultivated woman of fine Christian spirit; and she had learned years before not to interfere with her husband.

"Mr. Chairman," said Mr. Brand, rising immediately, "I am sure——"

But the meeting was breaking up in confusion.

"I just can't stay here any longer!" exclaimed Mrs. Allen, as she withdrew with Miss North. "I'll be sick from this meeting, now. These business meetings always do bring on one of my nervous headaches."

"And it's no wonder!" said Miss North.

"How can we expect our church to grow when we have such scenes?" asked Miss Adams of Elvira Stone.

"What made you people begin to go out?"

asked Cora Stewart. "I wanted to stay for the next act. A circus, wasn't it?"

"Not quite up to the one four weeks ago," said Mr. Palmer, as he joined the group.

As Mrs. Strong was leaving the lecture room with her husband, she passed near where Mr. Brand and Deacon Long were quietly chatting, apparently, as if they had not been the means of throwing a church meeting into a state of hopeless confusion.

"You men should be ashamed of yourselves!" she cried. "You seem to delight in scrapping as much as little boys do." She placed a hand on Mr. Brand's arm and looked searchingly into his face. "Do you feel that you have been manifesting the Christ spirit to-night?" she asked, looking from one to the other; and without waiting for a reply, she passed on with her husband to the door.

III

SUNDAY after Sunday passed, bringing to the pulpit various candidates and supplies. The number of clergymen wishing to appear before the church seemed almost limitless. Very few, however, had written in their own behalf; nearly all had asked some brother clergyman to bring their names to the notice of the church.

"Nine new names, this week," said the clerk, laying a package of letters on the table in the church parlor, where the Standing Committee were gathered for their meeting that evening. "If this keeps on," added Paul, laughing, "I shall soon be in need of a secretary."

"One with dark hair, who can write shorthand," laughed Mr. Strong, quickly following up the opportunity Paul's remark had opened.

"Certainly," replied the young man, doing his best to cover his embarrassment; "I'd want an expert stenographer—none other would do. And as for the color of her hair," pushing his fingers through his own red locks, "black is one of the indispensables."

Miss Adams looked up from her crocheting, her fingers keeping on busily with their work, while she entered heartily, in her quiet way, into the en-

joyment the rest of the committee were having at Paul's expense.

"Are we all here?" asked the chairman, looking around the room. "All but Deacon Long," he added.

"We can't wait for the deacon," said Amos Driver, impatiently consulting his watch. "It's time to begin. I want to get home before it gets too late."

"Very well," replied Mr. Strong; "we'll not wait. Perhaps the deacon may come in later. We shall proceed at once to the reading of the letters received since our last meeting."

"The first one," said the clerk, unsheathing the letter from its envelope, "is from the pastor of the First church of Palmyra, Minnesota. He writes :

"**BRETHREN :** In view of the vacancy in your pulpit I am writing to you to commend to your notice the Rev. James Armstrong, a personal friend of mine, now pastor of the First church of Norwich, Conn., a man whose gifts and training give him a peculiar fitness, in my judgment, to meet with more than ordinary success the exacting demands of your pulpit, located as it is under the shadow of a large university.

"Mr. Armstrong has been a successful pastor in the East for some ten years ; but like myself and many other brother clergymen, he has come to feel that there is a larger freedom of utterance in the pulpits of the West. Though the salary you pay at present is much less than what Mr. Armstrong is now receiving, I happen to know that this fact would make no difference with him ;

for he desires at almost any pecuniary sacrifice to exchange his present location for one where he can deliver his message with freedom.

“‘I am writing freely to you of his reasons for wanting to come West, because, from your location in a University town, it occurred to me that your church would offer just the opportunity he now desires.

“‘Mr. Armstrong is a thoroughly up to date, progressive man. He is a writer of recognized ability as you will see from the enclosed reviews of two of his volumes.

“‘Believe me, as ever,

“‘Sincerely yours,

“‘H. W. HENDRICK.’”

“That’s the kind of letter I like,” said Mrs. Terry. “It’s plain and to the point.”

“Yes; and I think we need just such a man,” said Mr. Strong. “Our pastors have been too conservative; we’ve lost a number of University families who now attend other churches simply because our preaching has been—well, because in other churches it is easy to find something more modern.”

“These families you speak of have gone doubtless where they belong,” said Brother Brand quickly. “If they had belonged to us they would have enjoyed our preaching and stayed with us.”

“Mr. Hendrick seems to take our liberality for granted,” said Mrs. Wood, smiling.

“Yes,” replied Miss Adams, without losing the count of her stitches.

"Perhaps if he knew us better, he would change his opinion," continued Mrs. Wood.

"Yes," again assented Miss Adams, her attention divided between her crocheting and the conversation about her. In any other woman this would have been intolerable; but in Miss Adams it was different. A little work-bag always accompanied her to committee meetings, church socials, coffees, and to all other church gatherings during the week except the midweek prayer-service.

"This review speaks very highly of Mr. Armstrong's book," said Mr. Driver, passing it on to Mrs. Terry.

"'Permanent and Temporary Elements in the Teaching of Paul,'" read Mrs. Terry. "That's an interesting title."

"But do you not notice that the clipping is from a Unitarian periodical?" asked Brother Brand.

"Is it?"

"Yes."

"'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?'" asked Mrs. Wood, the least suspicion of sarcasm in her tone. Mrs. Wood's only sister was a Unitarian. "Of course the book is heretical, being favorably reviewed in a Unitarian paper!"

"Shows at least its affinity," said Brand.

"I should like to read that book!" exclaimed Mrs. Terry, as she finished the reviews. "I think I shall send for a copy. Why, I never could agree with all that Paul teaches. It certainly is

reasonable to hold that there is an element in his teachings which applied only to the conditions of his day."

"For instance, his remark about women speaking in meeting," said Driver, glad of the chance to join with the ladies against Brand.

"Yes; and I think some of his doctrinal statements were colored by the prevailing atmosphere and expectations of his day," continued Mrs. Terry, warmly.

"But how can that be, when Paul was inspired?" asked Miss Adams, for the moment forgetting her crocheting.

"Yes," said Brand, "if the Bible is inspired, it's inspired, every word of it from Genesis to Revelations."

"Granting Paul's inspiration, couldn't there still be a temporary element in his teaching?" asked the clerk, who was expecting to enter the ministry.

Mrs. Terry looked at him gratefully and continued.

"Yes, why couldn't he be inspired to deliver a message with a temporary significance as well as one whose significance and value were permanent?"

"It's not a question what Paul might or might not have done," replied Brand, severely; "it's a question of the authority of God's Word. If once we begin to say, 'This is temporary and that's permanent,' we've robbed the Word of God of its

divine authority. Might as well have no Bible at all! For each of us would throw out as a 'temporary element' whatever didn't suit him."

"No; not throw it away, but interpret it in view of the conditions under which it was written," said Mrs. Wood.

"That is exactly what we women have to do with many of Paul's statements," added Mrs. Terry.

"And is it not what we all do with practically all of the Old Testament?" asked Mr. Strong.

"Certainly!" said Mrs. Terry. "Nor does this destroy our belief in the Bible, either."

"It's a dangerous position to hold," persisted Brand. "Ultimately it will land one in Unitarianism!"

"I've held it for twenty years," replied Mrs. Terry, warmly; "and I'm just as good a church member as—as you are!" Her voice was trembling in spite of her efforts to appear undisturbed. "I never could see the reason why liberal views may not be held by us as well as by Unitarians, or any other denomination," she added, looking around the room as if inviting support.

Mr. Strong was an excellent chairman. His unfailing good nature and his keen sense of humor enabled him frequently to divert the brethren from threshing over too often old straw from which the last kernel had long since been flailed.

"I believe," said he, smiling, "we are discussing Mr. Hendrick's letter. What is your pleasure concerning it?"

"I move that Mr. Armstrong's name be placed on our 'approved list,'" said Mrs. Terry. The motion was carried, though Mr. Brand and Deacon Long voted in the negative, and Miss Adams did not vote either way.

The clerk entered Mr. Armstrong's name beneath twenty-three others, and, returning the letter to its envelope, numbered it on the back, sixty-seven, which meant that the committee had previously read and discussed sixty-six letters of similar import as the one just added to the pile. From these sixty-six communications the committee had selected twenty-three names for further consideration. Already the first fifteen clergymen on this approved list had been before the church, supplying the pulpit from one to two Sundays each.

"The next letter," said the clerk unfolding the typewritten sheet before him, "is from Dr. Porter, Chairman of the Board of Recommendations, of the Divinity Faculty, of the University of the West. He writes :

"MY DEAR BRETHREN:—From an item in the *Weekly* I learn that you are still without a pastor. You are doubtless acting wisely in waiting so long for the right man. Too many churches act, in this important matter, with undue haste and reap consequences painful to themselves; for in selecting a pastor, as in buying a pair of shoes, few things are more painful than a misfit.

"I should have written to you before, had it

not been that it is our policy to locate our students as far as possible in churches smaller than yours. In this way the inevitable mistakes of the young pastor are kept in the background, as they could not be if our students at once entered upon more conspicuous fields.

“ ‘But in the event of your not having been able during the past six months to decide on a pastor, I now feel called upon to write you. From the nature of our student body, coming as the young men do from all over the world, we are able to suit the demands of different types of churches. We endeavor to know our men as a merchant knows his wares, so that when a church tells us what it wants we can make the selection accordingly. Few things are more distressing to us than misfits—a liberal man in a conservative pulpit, or vice versa ; or a man of scholarly habits and tastes where the people want most of all a pastor fond of making calls ; or a man who would like to spend most of his time in making calls, in a church which cares only to see its pastor in the pulpit, and demands good scholarly sermons.

“ ‘Now, if you will indicate what type of pastor you wish, whether married or single—some churches are very particular on this point,—liberal or conservative, a man of scholarly habits or one who cares more to be among people than books, one inclined to sociology—we are beginning to make a specialty of this type as it is freer from theological eccentricities and less apt to dwell on disputed doctrinal questions—or one inclined to literature, or to foreign missions, a man who studies the Bible in the original languages and reads the revised version in the pulpit, or one who uses only the King James’ version, a man who reads his manuscript or who speaks from

notes—in fact, brethren, let us know what you want and we will do our best to select a man of such qualities, temperament, training, family, age, and theological convictions as you may desire.

“Awaiting an opportunity to serve you, I am,

“Obediently yours,

“M. B. PORTER.”

“That letter contains sense!” exclaimed Driver. “Good common sense,” he added, reaching his long arm across the table. The clerk placed the letter in his hand. “It’s nonsense, sheer nonsense, this trusting the Lord to send us the right man! I’ve always said that since the Lord has given us brains he expects us to use them, in the election of a minister as well as in the buying of a horse.”

“But,” interposed Deacon Long, pained by the words which sounded to his ears very like sacrilege, “calling a minister is different from buying a horse; it’s the Lord’s work; ‘and how shall they preach except they be sent?’”

“Upon your theory, Deacon,” said Driver with his characteristic impatience with Deacon Long, “the Lord is interested in only a mighty little of what’s going on.”

“Do you call the salvation of immortal souls a trifling affair?” asked the deacon, almost choking.

“If you give the words the meaning they ought to have, certainly not,” replied Driver. “But it is nonsense to think that God is interested only in church work! I wouldn’t want anything to do

with such a God." His tone and expression conveyed even more meaning than his word. "Why, some men so belittle the Deity by their narrow, bigotted conceptions of him that I wonder he lets them live. When you wake up in the other world, Deacon, I suspect you'll be surprised to find that God is interested in many more things than you ever dreamed of."

"I get my idea of God," rejoined the deacon, "from the Bible; I have no desire to feed on the ungodly wisdom of this world, as some do. 'Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?'"

Mr. Driver arose from his chair and began pacing up and down the room, without deigning to reply. Driver never could sit still very long while discussing any matter with the deacon. There was something in the deacon's manner or in the spirit of his replies which seemed to make Driver always want to walk the floor while talking with him.

During the interval of silence, Miss Adams, unwinding her worsted a little, remarked:

"This Divinity School must be a very interesting place."

"It certainly is!" exclaimed Brand. "They have Unitarians, and Universalists, and Catholics, and Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Disciples all mixed up together! Is it any wonder in such a mixture, our young ministers get to holding all sorts of unscriptural beliefs? Why, it's the most natural

thing in the world for them to become like their associates. After living in such a mottled atmosphere for three years, the marvel is that any of them remain true to any creed."

"Then, you think that this Divinity School is doing our denomination harm?" asked Mrs. Wood.

"Harm?" cried Brand, excitedly. "Why it couldn't do us more harm. If I know anything about it, it's undermining the very foundation of our existence!" He spoke with deep feeling and earnestness.

"Indeed?"

"Yes; and the churches are beginning to find it out, too. Why, there are any number of churches already which will not permit a graduate from this school to enter their pulpit."

"Indeed? I had not heard of this before. Pray what is it that makes the school so dangerous?"

"Oh, one can't exactly name it: the fact is the whole Divinity School is out of harmony with our inherited conceptions and doctrines. For one thing, all the professors are Higher Critics,"—Mr. Brand pronounced the words "higher critics" with the same intonation he would have used in uttering the name of something exceedingly diabolical.

"Are you sure, Brother Brand, that *all* the professors there are Higher Critics?" asked Deacon Long, doubtfully. "I thought at least some of them were Christians."

"But may not a person be a Higher Critic and also a Christian?" asked Paul Green.

"I do not so understand it," replied Deacon Long. "The Higher Critic seeks to destroy our faith in the Bible. He cuts it to pieces; he tears it up; he explains away this; he throws out that; he would destroy the whole Bible if he could. And can such a minded person be a Christian?" Obviously, from the deacon's tone there could be but one answer to his question.

"I'm not quite clear on the subject, myself," said Mrs. Terry. "But I'm sure, Deacon Long, you carry your opinions a little too far."

"Impossible! It's impossible to go too far in defending the Word of God," cried the deacon.

"But we're all liable to be mistaken in our opinions, Deacon Long," rejoined Mrs. Terry, emphatically.

"Yes," assented Miss Adams, to whom Mrs. Terry had looked for support. Deacon Nelson, also a member of the Standing Committee, but seldom taking any part in the discussions, nodded his approval to Mrs. Terry's statements.

"But tell me, Brother Brand, if this Divinity School is, as you say, detrimental to the denomination, why do so many of our young ministers go there?" asked Mrs. Wood, a perplexed look settling upon her thoughtful face.

"Why do they go there?" repeated Brand. "Why do you wear a certain style of hat? Why? Because it's the fashion. And just now it's the

fashion to attend the University of the West. From all over the United States our young ministers are flocking there with as little reason for doing so as usually exists for following any of the present day fads."

"But is not the instruction of a superior grade?"

"What if it is? That makes the matter only so much the worse."

"How is that? I do not follow you."

"By their great intellectual ability these professors are able to make their students believe almost anything."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; they can take young men whose beliefs on entering the Divinity School are sound, orthodox, in full accord with the denomination, and in three years make them over completely, filling their heads with ideas no more in harmony with our beliefs than black is like white!"

"But Patterson writes in glowing terms of the Divinity professors," said Paul. "You remember he graduated here last year?"

"That's just it!" exclaimed Brand. "These professors by their great intellectual ability just hypnotize their students."

"And I've heard it said," added Deacon Long in a hoarse whisper, as if divulging some awful secret, "I've heard it said that Dr. Hopper sends souls to hell every day!"

A look of horror settled on Miss Adams' face;

one of incredulity on the faces of the other two ladies: while the corners of Mr. Strong's mouth showed marked indications of suppressed merriment. Strong, while in any of the business or committee meetings of the church, rarely indulged in levity; but afterward in talking over these discussions with his wife, some of the things that were said or done seemed very funny and afforded no end of amusement. His wife more than once told him that it must be the humorous side of these meetings which kept him in such regular attendance. He acknowledged to her that there might be something in it.

"Perhaps, brethren," he interposed, "we'd better pass on to the reading of the next letter. Of course this discussion is very interesting; but '*tempus fugit*.' What is the pleasure concerning this letter from Dr. Porter?"

"Suppose we ask Dr. Porter to send us an itemized description of two or three good men of the sociological type,—I believe he said that type was a specialty," said Driver.

"You make that as a motion?" asked the chairman.

"Yes."

In the vote there was no opposition.

The remaining letters, similar to dozens they had received, were disposed of with scarcely more than a reading.

"What are we ever going to do!" exclaimed Mrs. Terry. "This continual listening to trial

sermons is truly distracting—I had almost said demoralizing.”

“I agree with you,” said Mrs. Smith. “And demoralizing is none too strong a word, either. Indeed, you wouldn’t think so if you could hear the discussions at our dinner table, after every Sunday morning service.”

“Yes, it’s the same with us. My family has resolved itself into a group of critics,” continued Mrs. Terry. “The way every candidate and his sermon are discussed and torn to pieces is simply awful. Such preaching doesn’t do one particle of good!”

“I know it. One gets into the habit of being critical. We are all feeling it,” added Miss Adams.

“And our congregations are growing smaller every week. Only yesterday Mrs. James said she should not come any more until the church had decided on a pastor.”

“I hope we shall not lose the James family.”

“But we will lose them and other desirable families also, if this candidating keeps up much longer,” said Mrs. Strong, entering the room. “If it wasn’t for my husband I’d join some other church next week, myself! Our church is getting into a terrible condition. I couldn’t sit at home any longer. I had to come to this committee meeting. Something must be done!”

Mrs. Strong’s manner revealed her intense feeling. She was a most interesting and unique person, always saying or doing something unusual.

"We are doing all in our power to settle a pastor," objected Deacon Long. "More than a half a dozen letters were considered this evening."

"But what good does it do? What if you do have man after man preach for us? Whenever it comes to a vote what is the result? We all know—it has been thrust upon us so often. Whatever Brother Brand wants, Brother Driver is certain not to want. Why not deal with the real question—the obstinacy of these two men?"

Various members of the committee assented, highly pleased at Mrs. Strong's direct attack of the real problem.

"So far as I can see there is no end in sight. Recall our recent business meeting. Doubtless Deacon Long would say that these two brothers cannot help persistently opposing each other's wishes—'twas born in them, a part of their total depravity.' Be that as it may, it is quite clear that we shall never be able to decide on a pastor if this continues."

Both Mr. Brand and Mr. Driver were amused at Mrs. Strong's directness. They accepted from her in good grace what no other woman would have had the courage to utter in their presence.

It was Mr. Driver who spoke. "What suggestion have you to make, Mrs. Strong?"

"Why not let some one else propose a candidate?"

The idea was revolutionary. For more than a quarter of a century the function of proposing can-

didates had rested without question in the hands of these two members.

"I have a name to propose," continued Mrs. Strong. The members of the committee held their breath. "You recall the young man who preached for us last winter during our pastor's illness? Yes, Mr. Baldwin. I suggest his name."

"I remember him well," said Paul Green. "He impressed me very favorably."

"His sermons were so earnest," added Miss Adams. "Do you suppose we could get him? Perhaps he is already settled."

Before the committee meeting closed, Mrs. Strong's campaign, as it was styled, was well under way. Mr. Baldwin became the all absorbing topic of conversation. It was rather remarkable how many of the characteristics of Mr. Baldwin various persons were now able to recall.

In the business meeting which soon followed both Mr. Driver and Mr. Brand expressed themselves in favor of Mrs. Strong's candidate. Mr. Driver, however, was stubborn in his view that their pastor should be married; and so, to carry their point, the others agreed to issue the remarkable call which shortly afterward reached David Baldwin.

IV

“**T**IOGA, Minnesota, please.”

After several minutes of waiting in the long line before the ticket office window, the speaker's turn had come.

The agent selected the proper ticket, stamped it, and made the purchaser's change which he pushed with the ticket toward the young man standing before him. As he did this, his attention was arrested. He looked sharply at the young man for a moment, and as he turned to the next person in the line an amused expression played over his face. Plainly the agent was more than ordinarily interested.

The young man had just gathered up his change, depositing the coins in a little wallet which he dropped into his trousers pocket on the right hand side, while the bills were carefully folded in a pocketbook which was returned to a pocket in the inner side of his coat. There was nothing unusual in his appearance as he stood folding his ticket and putting it in his card-case. His movements were rapid, almost automatic, indicating an orderly mind in which the traces of habit were apparent. Doubtless he had gone through with these movements a hundred times during the past few years as he had purchased his railway tickets, putting the coins of his change

into his trousers pocket on the right hand side, the bills into the pocketbook, and the ticket into the card-case.

In height this young man was neither tall nor short—perhaps about the average, with more than the ordinary breadth of chest; having a clean shaven face save for a light mustache; brown hair with a scattering of gray on the temples; eyes which relieved the expression from being too severe; a chin such as men have who persist in a certain line of effort though it takes years to accomplish their purpose; lines about the mouth which reveal acquaintance with suffering and power to meet adverse circumstances; the general expression of one who could feel keenly the pleasure of a word of appreciation or the pain of harsh criticism. He easily wore the unmistakable air of one accustomed to reflection, to living in the realm of ideas, though he bore none of the distinctive marks of the different professions. One could not have said that he was a lawyer or a doctor; perhaps he was a teacher or a clergyman.

As the young man turned from the window and took two or three steps away, he suddenly stopped like one who had forgotten something, and then tried to regain the place at the window which he had just vacated; but the line had pushed up and this was impossible. How provoking! He stood waiting for a moment, as if loath to conform to the inevitable; then, walking to the end of the line, took his place in it. With slow creeping

movement the line edged on, gradually melting away at the upper end.

"Another ticket to Tioga, Minnesota," said he, when his turn came.

The agent smiled.

"Not used to buying tickets for two?" said he, good-naturedly.

"No," replied the young man.

"I knew it; I knew you'd be back in a few minutes for another," he laughed.

"Indeed! How is that?" asked the young man, smiling.

"Oh, lots of newly married men make the same mistake," said the agent, enjoying the other's embarrassment.

"Newly married men?" repeated the traveler.

"Certainly, it's no uncommon occurrence for a bridegroom to forget to buy a ticket for his wife."

"But what makes you think I belong to that class—to the newly married?"

"Three tickets to St. Paul, please," said the gentleman next in the line; and the young man stepped aside without getting an answer.

"I wish I knew how that agent got on to it," was his thought as he crossed the floor to the ladies' waiting-room.

"Why, David, how long you were!" exclaimed a young lady, whose eager eyes welcomed him as he approached her side. "I was becoming alarmed: is anything wrong with the trains?"

"Oh, no," he replied, drawing a chair near her. "Our connections are all right. We leave Chicago in thirty-five minutes."

"But, dear, why were you so long?"

"Well, I hardly know whether I should tell you or not," said David, laughing. "It certainly was a good joke on me."

The young lady looked into his face but said nothing. She felt that a fuller disclosure was coming.

"I came pretty near going to Tioga alone," he began.

"Alone?" laying her hand lightly on his arm. Even the suggestion of it startled her.

"Yes," he confessed. "I took my place in the line and when my turn came, you cannot guess what I did?"

"Tell me, David, what was it?" she asked, eagerly.

"Well, being accustomed for so many years to buying only one ticket, I forgot, for the moment, that I now needed to buy two."

"Why, David!" with the slightest trace of reproach in her tone. "You surely didn't forget that you had a wife!"

"Not exactly that, Miriam," said he; "but I did forget that I had to buy two tickets. The agent was greatly amused. He said that many newly married men did the same thing."

"Newly married men? How did he know that we were on our wedding trip?"

"I wanted to ask him myself, but the next passenger took his attention."

"But the people on the train to Chicago took us for an old couple, don't you think so?"

"If they didn't, it certainly wasn't our fault," replied David. "At least it wasn't mine. Didn't I act as if I had enjoyed the training of domesticity for a dozen years?"

"Oh, I am sure that no one took us for bride and groom," said Miriam. "Some bridal couples act so foolishly!"

There are some things, however, which nature evidently intends shall not be concealed, among which are the starry heavens, the perfume of the carnation, and the presence of a bridal party. And the truth of the matter is, that David and Miriam's attempts to pose as an old married couple deceived no one, and on their way to Chicago they had afforded no little merriment to their fellow passengers. But ignorance is bliss under such circumstances.

After David Baldwin received the letter from the First Church of Tioga, he lost no time in bringing it to the attention of a certain young woman who, he rightly surmised, would be almost equally interested in it with himself. In fact—following his chum's hint—he had come to regard the letter as a double favor of providence. It would provide him with a pastorate immediately upon graduation, and it would also prove a formidable weapon

in overcoming the scruples of his fiancée against an immediate marriage.

He had known Miriam Mathews since high school days, and their early comradeship there had ripened into deep mutual affection. When they were graduated, indeed, his love had carried him to such bounds that he urged her to consent to a hasty marriage. But Miriam's good sense perceived that it would mean the curtailing of his whole career. She steadfastly refused, although her own heart pleaded for him; while on his part he was hurt almost to anger.

But with calmer moments David could not but see her wisdom, although it doomed him to separation from her for at least seven years. The four years in the University, however, were at last ended; and the three years in the Divinity school as well. Meanwhile, not to lose intellectual pace with him, Miriam had pluckily worked her way through Vassar, and was now paying off the remainder of her school debt by the stenography already mentioned. It is small wonder, therefore, that David should have been so jubilant over the call to Tioga, which his old-time friend, Mrs. Strong, had secured for him. It was, in effect, a command to marry, and he believed that Miriam would no longer be able to resist his plea, when backed by such convincing proof of the necessity for the step.

When Miriam first read the letter the church at

Tioga had written to David she was convulsed with laughter.

"Did they not ask for a minute description, or at least to see a photograph of your intended?" she asked. "You know, churches are sometimes more particular about the minister's wife than they are about the minister himself."

"No, they did not ask for a detailed description. I wish they had!" he exclaimed. "Think of the letter I could have written! Who could help satisfying the most exacting critics when one has such a subject?" And David carried the hand of his sweetheart to his lips.

"Be not too certain of that," said Miriam. "I have in mind an instance where an accurate description of myself would have been disastrous."

"Disastrous?"

"Yes," replied Miriam, "disastrous to your settlement. It was this way: one of my friends at Vassar recently married a clergyman. On one occasion when he was to preach a trial sermon, Margaret accompanied her husband. Though the church was highly pleased with the sermon and found no fault with the young man, they did not call him; and the reason why leaked out a few weeks later."

"You mean they did not like his wife?" asked David.

"There seemed to be one insuperable objection to her: she has red hair."

"But no church would refuse to call a man whom they wanted, simply because his wife happened to have red hair!" said David, incredulously. "Are you sure this is not an ungrounded rumor?"

"Indeed I am!" cried Miriam. "I have it directly from my Aunt Julia who is a member of the church where it occurred. She knew my acquaintance with Margaret—Mr. Jackson's wife—and wrote me that Mr. Jackson would certainly have been called had his name been brought before the church; but the chairman of the pulpit committee vigorously opposed bringing it up. Reluctantly the other two members of the committee yielded, though they were puzzled to account for their chairman's attitude. Inadvertently the reason for it came to light. The chairman's wife was a woman of very strong prejudices, one of the strongest of which was her prejudice against red hair."

"I see," said David. "It is fortunate that I did not write the church at Tioga a full description of you; perhaps there are some important women there also who have strong prejudices," he laughed.

"But, David, if the church knows of your engagement they will not object to waiting a year for us to be married. It will take another year to pay off my school debt, you know."

"I hardly think they would wait," said David.

"But my debt—I must meet this before we are

married. It would not be right to encumber our future this way."

David wisely refrained from discussing the subject further just then. He described the work which he hoped to do at Tioga; how the several hundred students at the university, whose religious difficulties he understood so well, appealed to him; how he thought of having a student's class where he could come into closer touch with these young men and women, than it would be possible to do in the more formal services. Doubtless the field had its difficulties—what church did not have them? But the opening had come to him unsought when everything else seemed closed. Was it not providential? If he did not settle with the Tioga church perhaps he would receive another call, but the salary would not be more than seven or eight hundred—many of the fellows began their first pastorate on even less salary than that.

"Why, dearest," said he, eagerly, and as if the thought had not been uppermost in his mind all the evening, "the two hundred extra at Tioga would pay your school debt during our first year there. Suppose we called the salary only eight hundred for the first year—reserving two hundred for this special purpose? Would it not be better for us to go to Tioga than for me to run the risk of not getting another call?"

"Are you quite sure we could reserve the two hundred during the first year?" asked Miriam, hesitatingly.

“Why not? We would then have as much to live on as I would probably get elsewhere.”

Miriam thought of the seven years which had passed since David's first proposal ; how he had waited so long in deference to her wishes, as it now appeared to her. If she could be sure that her school debt would be no encumbrance—how her heart thrilled with the thought of it ! Another year was a long time to wait. Surely, they could live on eight hundred ; and after the first year there would be the entire amount—the ten hundred.

“There would be some advantages in beginning our work together,” said Miriam, meditatively.

“Then you consent to our marriage during the summer?” he cried, every nerve taut with suspense.

“If you desire it, dearest,” she replied, in a low tone, more gracious, more thrilling than human voice had ever sounded to him before.

“My darling ! This is more than I deserve,” he cried.

“Oh, I am so happy, David !” she breathed, as he drew her gently to him. “And I am so glad we are not to wait another year,” looking up into his eyes.

For answer—what else could he do ?—his head bent a little forward and his lips drew down to a level with hers ; the old, old miracle was performed again—a touch of lips was transmuted into one of the most blissful experiences of life !

The train bearing David Baldwin and his bride to their unexplored field of labor was rushing on toward the great Northwest. The heat of an August day beat down upon them ; the atmosphere was dry and filled with dust.

A mother with a restless little baby sat just in front of David and Miriam, on the opposite side of the aisle. The woman was scarcely twenty, with low forehead, retreating chin, and large nose ; her mouth was sensitive and her eyes kindly in their look as she gazed upon her babe ; her expression indicated a low grade of intelligence, a mind in which there was much fallow ground ; hers was the minimum of preparation for the responsibilities of motherhood which she had thoughtlessly invited or had had thrust upon her. The child grew more restless and cried louder and louder. The poor mother tried in vain to soothe it.

"Let me take the baby," said Miriam, crossing to the mother's side. "You are tired. Let me relieve you."

The mother looked into Miriam's face, then yielded the infant willingly.

"Have you traveled far ?" Miriam continued.

"From New York—before then, from old country," she answered, brokenly, with a strong foreign accent.

"Alone, and with this baby ?" asked Miriam, in surprise.

"Yes," replied the woman.

"No wonder you are tired out."

The little babe was soon asleep in Miriam's arms; and as she returned it to the mother, the woman's mute look of gratitude stirred her heart.

"I have been thinking, David," Miriam said, after she had resumed her seat by her husband's side, "I have been thinking of what the church people will probably say when they know that I am not a member of any church."

"We shall let them think whatever they please," replied David. "So long as I am satisfied, I'm sure they ought to be."

"I hope they won't expect too much of me," she continued, "for I want to give my best energy to our own home life."

"And that, dear, is just what I wish you to do. If any man needs the inspiration of his home, it's a pastor. I shall never consent to any church's robbing me of my wife."

"I think you said that the church does not have a parsonage."

"No; we shall have to rent a small house, or perhaps a flat."

"Should we not rent as cheaply as possible for the first year or two?—there will be so many things for us to buy."

"Yes, I think so," said David.

"Of course it will not matter to the church where we live, so long as they have no parsonage."

"Certainly not; though I suppose churches prefer to have their pastors live in good houses and in a desirable quarter of the community."

"Yes, doubtless such a feeling is natural."

"But I have been thinking, Miriam, of trying to get a house where we could be in close touch with the uneducated and the poorer class of people ; and of carrying out the settlement idea on a small scale."

"Wouldn't that be grand !" cried Miriam. "I do hope we may."

"But, dearest, it would put us to many inconveniences."

"Yes ; but the Christ put up with many inconveniences by living among the lowly, did he not ?"

"And the members of the church would be sure to criticise such a step."

"But should we mind what people say about us when we are attempting to live the Christ life ?" asked Miriam.

"I know ; but it's difficult not to mind," replied David. "In many ways I wish we were going to a social settlement : that kind of work appeals to me very strongly, and I know your desires, dear, are in the same direction. But the pastorate of this church is before us now, and our first obligation will be to minister to the spiritual needs of the church ; to get the members interested in some definite lines of Christian service ; and to do what we can to help as many of the students as possible with their religious problems."

"Is the church open to modern thought ?" asked Miriam.

"I can only judge from what they have done—

knowing that I am from the University of the West, and having heard me preach four sermons which I considered full of modern thought, they have invited me to become their pastor. From this one would judge that they are liberal."

"I am glad. I think it is very fortunate. I fear, David, if you were to become pastor of a church as conservative as the one at my home, some very serious problems might arise."

"But I have no fears of any such thing happening at Tioga. Its being a University town makes a great difference. But even if the circumstances were otherwise, even if I were going to a conservative church, I should be compelled to deliver the message as it burns in my heart. As I think of it, the function of a minister is to bear witness to the truth rather than to preach to people only what they have been accustomed to hearing. As Christ bore witness to the truth and was not careful to present only such views as were in accord with the opinions of his day, so the Christian minister should bear witness to the truth as it burns in his own heart. His work is worthy only as he delivers the message that possesses him."

"I am so glad, David, that you think as you do on these subjects. How I shall delight to hear you preach!" And Miriam's hand edged down to the side of David's. "For so many years sermons haven't meant much to me." Her hand slipped into his. "But I know yours will." There was a gentle pressure. "I shall always delight to

listen to you, dearest; you have made so many of my own thoughts clearer to me."

"Now you are feeding me taffy," said David, returning the pressure with interest. "My first lessons in modern religious thought I received from you, dearest; it was from you that I first learned the meaning of redemptive suffering, that love suffers in saving because it cannot do otherwise."

The possession of Miriam's hand thrilled David like a draught of wine. Forgotten were his resolutions to appear like one who had been married a long time; and during their remaining two hours' ride, he was a bridegroom. And the joy of it was disturbed only by their arrival at their destination.

"Tioga!" finally announced the brakeman, ending their present dream of bliss. Gathering up their belongings, they made their way through the busy station to the street.

They had arrived unannounced save for David's having written to Mrs. Meek to engage a suite of rooms, and to Mr. Strong to assure the church of his intention of being present for the next Sunday's services.

"A gentleman in the parlor, sir, wishes to see you," said Mrs. Meek, as David and Miriam were leaving the dining-room that same evening.

"I'll be up within a minute or two, dear," said David, as Miriam passed on to their rooms alone;

and following Mrs. Meek to the parlor, David entered. A tall young man with bushy black hair arose to meet him.

"The Reverend David Baldwin, I believe," said the young man, advancing and offering his own card.

"Yes," said David. A glance at the card informed him that his caller was a newspaper reporter. It was the first time he had been sought out by a representative of the press; and a highly pleasurable emotion swelled his breast.

"Pardon me, Reverend, but with your permission I would like to ask a few questions," said the reporter, opening his note-book. "I'll promise you, Reverend, not to be long," he added apologetically.

"Very well," said David, sitting down. "I can spare a moment or two," glancing at his watch. Since entering the room his time had become more precious. As soon as we find that another person wants anything belonging to us—an old book, a bit of china, or our time—it immediately rises in value in our own estimation.

"Our readers, Reverend," began the reporter, in an easy, off-hand manner, "will want to know something of the new pastor who has just come among us. Now, Reverend, if you will write up an account of yourself, I will send for it any hour you name before midnight; just so we have it at the office by midnight, that's time enough. And in this account, Reverend," the reporter's voice came

down to a confidential tone and he drew his chair a little nearer David, "we would like to have you include any particulars about yourself which you care to have published—some statements of your education, your personal attitude on any of the religious problems of the hour. In fact, write anything you please. The public, you know, is interested in ministers; and, of course, the more we know of them, the better. At what hour, Reverend, could you have the copy ready?"

"I—but isn't your request a little unusual—this writing up one's self?" asked David, doubtingly.

"Oh, no, Reverend; on the contrary, it is a very common practice," the reporter hastened to explain. "But," he added, lowering his tone, "the fact that a man has written up himself is, of course, never made public. Our readers, Reverend, never stop to ask how we get our information. Shall I send for it at, say, eleven? or would you wish a little more time?"

David hesitated. The opportunity did indeed appeal to him. Already, in imagination, he saw in to-morrow morning's paper an account of himself, modestly written to be sure, yet containing some little touches which a reporter would most probably fail to bring out in writing up an interview. Why should he not write the account? Did not the reporter say the practice was a common one? The public was interested in the new pastor. Would it not be better to write up a full and accurate account of himself than to trust

to the uncertain statements the reporter might make?

These thoughts flashed through David's mind in an instant; but as he opened his lips to say that he would gather together a few statements which might interest the readers of the *Times*, the thought of Miriam arrested him. Instantly her judgment on the matter stood out before him. Very clearly, very definitely, without the suspicion of a doubt, David saw that she would condemn the act.

"I am sorry to refuse you—sorry that I cannot serve your readers in the way you ask, Mr. Waller," said David, courteously; "but I cannot write the account."

"I'm sorry, Reverend, very sorry; for you could work up the copy much more to your own satisfaction than I can. However, I'm used to making a stab at such things. You arrived in the city this evening?"

"Yes."

"Mrs. Baldwin accompanied you?"

"Yes."

"This was your wedding trip also, was it not?"

"Yes," said David, smiling.

"You are a graduate of a divinity school?"

"Yes."

"At the University of the West?" asked the reporter.

"Yes," said David again.

"Then this is your first pastorate, is it not, Reverend?"

"Yes."

"But you have preached more or less before this?"

"Yes."

"Did you not preach here two or three times last winter?"

"Yes."

"And the church extended their call from having heard you then?"

"Yes," assented David.

"Then you are comparatively a stranger in our midst, Reverend?"

"Yes."

Both men laughed. The cumulative effect of David's answers was becoming humorous.

"Would you mind, Reverend, stating the year of your birth?" asked the reporter.

"I am twenty-nine years old and was born in Georgia," replied David.

"Indeed? Have you lived in the North long, Reverend?"

"Since my fifth year."

After asking several other questions the reporter rose to leave. "Oh, I nearly forgot one item," said he, opening his note-book again. "Your subject for Sunday, Reverend—may I get its exact wording?"

"Certainly," said David. "My theme for the morning will be The Contagion of Life."

"A very interesting topic, Reverend; a very interesting topic. Think I shall have to drop in

and hear what you have to say on it, though to tell the truth, Reverend, I am not over-fond of sermons."

"I shall be very glad to have you worship with us Sunday morning," said David.

"Thank you, Reverend," said the reporter, extending his hand. "And as a representative of the *Times* I am glad to welcome you to our thriving little city. Good-night, Reverend. Many thanks for the interview."

"Good-night," said David. And he hurried up to Miriam.

"To think, sweetheart, that I was detained for a half hour!" exclaimed David, kissing his bride as he entered the room.

"Only a half hour? Why, dearest, it seemed two hours!" said Miriam. "And I was beginning to be a little impatient with the man who was keeping you. I was beginning to dislike deacons——"

"Deacons?" laughed David.

"Why wasn't he one of the deacons of the church? Who else would think of searching us out so soon?" asked Miriam.

"No, he was not one of the deacons, only a newspaper reporter," replied David carelessly, as if being interviewed by a reporter was a matter of common occurrence with him. "He wanted to get the subject of my sermon for Sunday morning and also a few facts for a little notice in the paper."

And he pulled up an easy chair in front of

Miriam and stretched himself into it. Both were tired, for they had been traveling since Wednesday noon, having taken the train immediately after an early wedding dinner at Miriam's home. This was their first hour alone since their marriage.

"Well, sweetheart," said David, as he settled himself into a comfortable position, "we are here at last. And how does the little girl feel—pretty tired?"

"Oh, no, not very tired; the time passed so quickly."

"But think, sweetheart, what a long and lonely journey it would have been if I'd had to come alone," said David.

"Are you sure, David, that you would have missed me so much?" Miriam asked, her face suffused with tenderness, her eyes lifted for a moment to his. What bride does not delight in the reiteration of her husband's devotion, however much she may be assured of it? But why should this be? why should not one declaration be sufficient? Why does a woman's heart crave to be told again and again what she already knows—that she is dearer to her husband than all the rest of the world besides? But the ways of a woman's heart have always been past finding out. A mystery to herself, woman is a deeper mystery to man. It was so with the ancients; it is more profoundly true of us moderns. For with our increase of knowledge the mystery has but deepened.

V

IT was Sunday morning, and Miriam was preparing her toilet for church.

"Say, dear?" she called.

"Well, sweetheart?" answered David from beyond the portières, in their little sitting-room.

"Am I interrupting you in your studying?" she asked.

"Of course not, sweetheart," said David, putting his finger on the line where he had stopped in the reading of his manuscript. "Do you want anything?"

"Why, dear," continued Miriam, as she went on with the making of her toilet, "if I'm not interrupting you to ask, how long does it take to walk to the church?"

"Why, not long; only about ten minutes, sweetheart," answered David, at the same time glancing over the remainder of the page of his sermon. "Yes, I remember from having walked it last winter; it takes just about ten minutes." His eyes began moving rapidly over the next page.

"Then, dear, suppose we start so as to get there just on time?" called Miriam.

"Very well, sweetheart, if you wish," said David, scanning the contents of another page as he answered.

Miriam wished on this their first Sunday in Tioga to avoid the embarrassment of sitting in church several minutes before the opening of the services, a conscious target to many a pair of curious eyes ; so they waited until ten-twenty, ten minutes before the opening of the service, before they left their room.

The morning was warm, the last Sunday in August. But Central Avenue was so well shaded that it was scarcely necessary to carry a parasol, though Miriam had brought along her dainty affair, with its white handle and its lavender colored silk and lace. The streets had been sprinkled earlier in the morning and there was no dust. The air was fragrant with a mixed perfume of many late blossoms and shrubs ; among the trees the birds were still chirping, though with less volume than two or three hours before ; while up the trunk of a tree here and there squirrels scampered as David and Miriam approached.

Miriam was modestly dressed in white. Her face was full and rosy with just a trifle more color this morning than usual. In height she was a little under the average for a woman. Walking by her side David appeared tall, though he was not. In his hand he carried his study Bible, the revised version not bound in limp cover, and a hymn book. He was dressed in full clerical attire, with white tie, white linen waistcoat, Prince Albert coat, and enameled shoes.

According to his custom, David was meditating

on his opening prayer as he walked along ; and in so doing he lost himself to the extent that he quite forgot to suit his pace to Miriam's, until he was a step or two ahead of her.

"Pardon me, sweetheart !" he cried, as he noticed this. "Am I walking too fast for the little girl?"

"Dear, I'm trying my best to keep up," panted Miriam, who was becoming heated.

They walked on more slowly, David carefully suiting his gait to Miriam's.

"If there isn't the last bell !" he exclaimed, when they were yet several blocks from the church.

"Why, dear, I thought you said we could walk it in ten minutes ?" said Miriam anxiously.

"Ten minutes of my strides, I should have said," answered David, grimly.

"But we'll be late, dear," said Miriam. "Hadn't you better go on ahead, David?"

"No," said David, "a minute or two will not make much difference."

On they walked. Were blocks ever before so long? And what a slow method of getting over the ground walking was, anyway! At last they reached the church door, and handing Miriam to one of the ushers, David went through the lecture-room to the pastor's study, where two of the deacons were awaiting him. Deacon Long was holding his watch in his hand.

"I fear I'm a little late," said David hurriedly,

as he shook hands with the brethren. "But I've learned," said he, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow, "if it takes one person ten minutes to walk to church, it will take two nearly twice as long."

"When a man gets married," observed Deacon Nelson, "he has many new lessons to learn."

"It's now four minutes late," said Deacon Long, consulting his watch. "Perhaps you had better go in at once. The congregation is waiting."

David stepped toward the door leading to the pulpit.

"But shall we not have our usual prayer first?" asked Deacon Nelson.

For many years Deacon Nelson had found his chief enjoyment of the Sunday services in meeting the pastor before the morning sermon and having a short season of prayer. On several occasions when too ill to leave the house during the week, he would be well enough to attend church Sunday morning, for he had set his heart upon it. And the first Sunday with a new pastor was a red letter day with the deacon, an occasion toward which he would look forward for weeks, brooding the while over the petition he would then offer.

David knew something of Deacon Nelson's custom, and seeing the pained look on the old gentleman's face, he said,

"Certainly, Deacon Nelson. The congregation can wait a moment longer. Will you please lead us?"

They knelt and Deacon Nelson prayed. Though an unlettered man, rude of speech in ordinary conversation, the deacon's language when praying was beautiful; the sentiment of the prayer was tender and sympathetic. Under other circumstances David would have wished the deacon to continue praying as long as he desired: the prayer was so unusual in its inspirational power. But there was the waiting congregation! And this fact turned the eloquence of the deacon's petition into a scalding stream, torturing poor David instead of blessing him. But the deacon also was conscious of the waiting audience, and with effort kept down the rising flow of words; and when the prayer was finished David added a fervent "Amen," the meaning of which was by no means limited to the sanctioning of the deacon's prayer. Glancing nervously at his watch as he rose from his knees, David saw that he was seven and a half minutes late. In not the best frame of mind to meet his congregation, he stepped through the doorway and took his seat behind the pulpit.

During the anthem before the sermon he regained his composure sufficiently to glance over the audience. A lady with a large black hat moved a little to one side. David thought he saw a familiar face. Could it be possible that the portly gentleman sitting there was Dr. Graham, president of Greene College? For a moment the lady's hat intercepted David's view, then it moved to one side again. There was no doubting it—

there sat the genial doctor, one of the best preachers in the church. In another direction where the faces were nearly all strange, David detected another familiar face. Shades of the patriarchs ! if there wasn't Dr. Harmon, one of his divinity professors. In other parts of the audience David recognized three more well-known clergymen. Though David knew that Tioga was something of a summer resort, with easy access to good fishing and boating, he had never dreamed of having to preach before such men.

Already embarrassed because he had kept the congregation waiting so long, David's propensity to perspire received a new impetus as he saw these eminent clergymen sitting before him. Every pore in his body seemed like a bubbling spring. From his temples a little stream of perspiration trickled down the side of his face ; his collar grew less and less able to maintain an upright position.

At this juncture the anthem was finished and the time for the sermon had come. David arose, and opening his study Bible to the tenth chapter of John's Gospel, read the tenth verse as his text. As he did so, he noticed Mr. Waller, the reporter, in one of the pews to the extreme left, begin to take short-hand notes. This was David's first experience in being reported ; in an instant as he saw Mr. Waller, he forgot the introductory sentences of his sermon. Without hesitation, however, he re-read the text and again announced its

location. He glanced hurriedly at his notes ; he never carried his manuscript into the pulpit ; but his outline was meaningless to him as he now looked at it.

What should he do ? He could not recall a single word he had intended to say. And worse than this he could not remember any of the ideas of his introduction. The whole section was a blank. Stepping to one side of the pulpit with as much deliberation as if he had planned to do so, David said :

“ My friends —— ”

A hush passed over the congregation. Every face turned toward him. Here and there persons leaned a little to one side to get a better view of the speaker. David looked over the audience as a speaker does sometimes when he is waiting for the people to get very still. The audience before David, save for the slight noise produced by the fans, became quiet. David had not the remotest idea what he should say next ; but the occasion demanded that something should be said and said at once. Though the interval since he had pronounced the first two words seemed painfully long to him, it was in reality no longer than a breath. As if continuing what he had planned to say, David went on :

“ —— for ten years I have been looking forward to this moment.”

Oh, what a falsehood ! He had never, never looked forward to such a moment as this. How

different the moment was from anything he had ever expected! The people were all attention. Deacon Long, sitting in the rear of the house, was holding his right hand up to his ear to assist his hearing. Again it seemed to David that he had made a pause of intolerable length when in reality it was no longer than the other. The words had escaped him. He hardly knew how or why. Now they must be followed up by some statement. But what should it be? What? Again David spoke.

“For the first time since I began studying for the ministry,”—were the words that came. But how should he finish the sentence? Should he frankly confess that for the first time since he began speaking in public his senses had failed him? Perhaps it would be best to make this explanation and dismiss the audience. No, no; the humiliation of it would crush him. But how to finish that sentence? This debating in David’s mind having occupied no more time than it takes to make a natural pause in the middle of a sentence, the speaker, struggling to finish the sentence in a way which would not appear utterly senseless, said :

“—— it is possible ——”

Of all the possibilities imaginable which one should it be? was the thought in David’s mind as the word “possible” escaped from his lips. But quick as a flash, without any perceptible hesitation, the sentence was finished with these words :

“—— for me to think of myself as a pastor and of a congregation as my people.”

The fog had lifted. As David uttered these words his mind cleared. He knew what he had said and now continued for a moment along the same line, telling the congregation how much he had looked forward during all of his student years to the time when he should be a pastor ; how he had almost envied those pastors who had held a large place in the sympathy and prayers of a church. And now that this opportunity had come to him, the privilege of being a pastor, he asked for a place in the affection of his people, and to be upheld by their prayers and their sympathy.

As if all of this had been planned and was now out of the way, David turned to his sermon. The subject was one which possessed him—“the contagion of life.” By a gradual approach he led up to the statements that the great need of the world is spiritual health, and that this could be attained by the individual who would place his life daily by the side of that of the Christ ; that this assimilation of the thought and the spirit of the Christ is salvation ; and that as Christ is the perfect source of spiritual health, so his followers should be sources in themselves, each in some worthy measure imparting spiritual health to the lives that are nearest.

During the delivery of the sermon David was above his average ; indeed, seldom had his thoughts so pressed for expression ; seldom had he been

carried into such flights of imagination and impassioned oratory. The glow of utterance was upon him; and, as if an illustration of the central thought of the discourse, the audience caught something of the speaker's glow and enjoyed it with him.

At the close of the service David mingled with the people in the rear of the church, shaking hands with as many as he could as they passed out. Dr. Harmon greeted him warmly.

"I wish to express my appreciation of the service, Mr. Baldwin," said he. "I am well pleased with it all, but especially with your opening remarks which were all the more effective for being spontaneous and unstudied."

David did not think it worth while to make a confession just then. As he joined Miriam who, under the charge of Mrs. Strong, had been meeting several of the ladies of the church, he was told that they were invited to go home with Mrs. Strong for dinner.

VI

IF it were possible for a pastor to become both invisible and omnipresent, and thus on Sunday morning at the close of the service accompany each of his hearers home, what do you think would be the state of his mind after an hour or two? What do you think would be the state of *your* pastor's mind? How do you suppose you would feel, if you were a clergyman, to hear remarks about the way you combed your hair, or, if you happened to have but little hair, to hear your bald spot discussed—what a pity your hair is getting thin, how did it happen? did it come from over-study? too bad for a clergyman to have a bald spot! flies were always so annoying to ministers with bald heads; to hear further remarks and sundry observations about your ears, your nose, your teeth, your eyes, your hands, your feet, the shoes you wore, your height, your breadth, your voice, your gestures, your way of sitting down, your manner of getting up, your way of standing—too much on one foot or your feet were too far apart—the length of your prayers, the length of your discourse, your diction, your enunciation, your way of reading the Scripture, your manner of announcing the hymns, how you opened the service, how you closed it, how you looked up or how you looked down, your peculiar way of closing

your mouth ; to hear opinions, quite the opposite to what you hold, attributed to you ; to hear your own thoughts, dear to you because your own mental offspring, repeated in such mutilated forms as to be scarcely recognizable ; to hear comparisons drawn between you and the Reverend Blank ; to hear your family freely discussed—how your wife was dressed, and how she looked—better than usual, or was she not just a trifle paler ? It was too bad her health wasn't better ; to hear some of your audience speaking in extravagant praise of yourself and of your sermon, while others were unable to see why the good Lord had ever put it into your head to preach at all ; to hear violent arguments over whether you had said this or that, whether you were not too conservative or too liberal, *et cetera, ad infinitum* ; how do you suppose you would feel to hear yourself discussed in this way ?

"But," you reply, "a clergyman doesn't know what is being said about him, and if it does the people any good, why let them talk."

Let it be hoped that these discussions and remarks about ministers do accomplish some good ; but is it true that clergymen are unaware of what the members of their congregation are saying of them ? They may be for a time, but sooner or later it filters through unsuspected channels to the ears of the pastor or the pastor's wife. Of course this is all very well so long as the pastor is in high favor ; it is likely he can do better work if

he knows that his efforts are appreciated. But when dissatisfaction has arisen, the channels unfortunately are still open; and few conditions in life are more painful than that of a clergyman's, when the tide of popular favor has turned against him.

As the congregation was leaving the church after David's first sermon as pastor, Mr. Driver, coming out of the lecture-room where, before the service, he usually left his hat and Sunday mail, accosted Deacon Long.

"Well, deacon," said he, tapping him lightly on the shoulder, "that was what I call a down-right sensible sermon. None of your pious nonsense in that discourse, eh?"

"The sermon was very good," replied the deacon, "very good; at least what I heard of it was. But don't you think he talks too low? In the back of the church where I was sitting, one could scarcely hear half what he said."

"Nonsense!" returned Driver. "The young man has a very good voice. But say, deacon, people who are hard of hearing shouldn't sit in the extreme rear of the church."

"But *I'm* not hard of hearing," replied Deacon Long, quickly. "I can hear very well anywhere in the church if the speaker has a good voice."

Mr. Driver laughed as he passed on. He had his own opinion of the sermon and cared very little what other people thought of it. Not so

with Deacon Long. He was not always certain whether he liked a sermon or not until he had heard various remarks about it and had talked it over with his wife. Sometimes it was nearly the middle of the week before he came to any definite conclusion. So while waiting to hear what some of the other members might say, he met Mr. Strong.

"Well, Deacon Long, how did you enjoy the sermon this morning?" said Mr. Strong, shaking the deacon's hand which moved up and down not unlike a pump-handle. "Fine discourse, wasn't it?"

"Better than I expected," acknowledged the deacon; "at least so far as I—yes, it was very good," said he, changing his sentence.

"Wasn't that a grand sermon!" exclaimed Mrs. Harrington, approaching the two gentlemen. "And I'm glad we have at last got a minister progressive enough to use the Revised Version."

"The deacon and I were just saying how much we enjoyed the discourse," said Mr. Strong.

"Yes, it was better than I had expected," repeated the deacon; "at least what—yes, I liked it very well," said he.

"Good-morning, Deacon Long," said Mrs. Terry, a moment later. "It seems nice to have a pastor again, doesn't it? I enjoyed the sermon so much! How did you like it?"

"Good-morning, Mrs. Terry; good-morning, Deacon Long," said Miss Irving, breaking in

before the deacon had time to reply. "Delightful sermon, wasn't it? His thought was so clear that it was a pleasure to follow him."

The ladies passed on shaking hands with those who stood near, and the deacon after greeting two or three others, made his way to where Mr. Brand was standing.

"The congregation seem well pleased with the sermon," said the deacon without committing himself. The two walked a little aside. Mr. Brand was silent.

"Don't you think his voice is pitched a little too low?" the deacon asked, trying to draw the other out.

"Possibly, though I hadn't noticed it," was the reply.

"Driver spoke very highly of the sermon," said the deacon, knowing that this was what Brand was waiting for.

"Did he?" said the other.

"Yes. He said it was a 'downright sensible sermon.'"

"Anything else?"

"He said something about the discourse not containing 'any of your pious nonsense.'"

"E-um'm, e-um'm," responded Brand without opening his lips and with significant nods of his head. "Driver said that, did he?"

"Yes," replied the deacon, anxious to discover Brand's opinion.

"Of course, anybody knowing what Driver be-

lieves could have told what he'd thought of *that* sermon. You didn't hear it all, did you?"

"His voice didn't carry very well," said the deacon, "and I guess I did miss about half of it."

"I thought so; I thought so," said Brand with more significant and mysterious nods of his head.

"You don't mean that you detected anything unsound?" Deacon Long asked in a low, eager voice.

"I haven't made such a statement and I prefer not to express my opinion either one way or the other. But time will tell, time will tell," said Brand, with the same mysterious air; and seeing his wife waiting for him, Brand joined her at the main exit.

Deacon Long and his wife were among the last to leave the church. "Everybody seem well pleased with the sermon," ventured Mrs. Long, as they were walking slowly home.

"Several spoke very highly of it," said he.

"Not everybody, then?"

"I heard some remarks which were not so favorable," admitted the deacon.

They walked a part of a block in silence.

"Was it Brother Driver?" she asked at length.

"No."

"Then it was Brother Brand?"

"Yes."

After a moment in which neither had spoken, the deacon continued, "I rather think that Brand suspects something."

"Suspects?" exclaimed Mrs. Long, horrified.

"Yes. Though Brand didn't say so in just that many words, yet I am positive that he suspects Mr. Baldwin of being unsound in his orthodoxy." This disclosure was made with apparent reluctance. "You know, Mr. Baldwin is from the University of the West," he added.

"But—I didn't detect anything unorthodox in the sermon, did you, Jacob?"

"Not—well, not exactly unsound, Josephine," admitted the deacon, with hesitation. "But, then, where I sat one couldn't hear *all* that he did say," said he, as if excusing himself for having been delinquent in one of his important duties.

"Perhaps, Jacob," said his wife, "you had better sit a little further front next Sunday."

"Why, what difference would that make, Josephine?" asked the deacon, with the least bit of irritation. "From the way you talk, one would think I was deaf."

"You know I don't think any such a thing, Jacob," she hastened to reply. "But Mr. Baldwin's voice doesn't seem to carry well, and I thought if you'd a mind to sit a little nearer the pulpit you might catch what was said better. For the deacons cannot be too watchful, they cannot be too particular, Jacob, if Brother Brand has reasons for his suspicions. And I should feel terribly humiliated, Jacob, if you, the senior deacon in the church, let either of the others get ahead of you in detecting unsound doctrine."

"Perhaps you're right, Josephine," said he; "mebbe I'd better sit a few seats nearer the pulpit."

"I think you'd better, Jacob; and wouldn't it be well also to keep a note-book and take down some of the suspicious statements? There's nothing like getting such things down in black and white."

"Mebbe I'd better, Josephine," said he solemnly.

Having raised a family of five children, all of whom had long since been married, Deacon Long and his wife were gracefully approaching the eventide of their earthly existence. Their three daughters, on marrying, had removed to other cities; but the two sons had succeeded their father in the bakery business. It was a source of grief to both the deacon and his wife that neither of the sons had ever joined the church.

The Brands and Mrs. Allen were waiting for the street car when Dr. and Mrs. Wood joined them at the corner.

"A thoroughly good sermon we had this morning," said the doctor, pleasantly. "Though not a churchman myself, I always reserve the right to enjoy a good sermon when I am fortunate enough to hear one."

Dr. Wood was a physician, a highly cultivated man whose views on religious subjects were known to be extremely liberal. He was not a regular attendant at church.

"Yes, I think we are to be congratulated for

having secured such a man as Mr. Baldwin," said Mrs. Wood, enthusiastically.

Mrs. Brand looked at her husband, whose opinion of the service she had not yet learned ; but as he did not immediately speak, she said, "Ye-s, I hope he may do a great deal of good." But, having taken her clew from her husband's reticence, there was something in her tone which seemed to say, "But I doubt it, though."

The arrival of the car cut short the necessity for further conversation. Later, at the dinner-table, Mrs. Brand asked, "Was there anything the matter, Sylvester, with the sermon this morning?"

"Why, you heard what the preacher said, didn't you?" was the reply.

"Ye-s, but I can't recall anything that was particularly out of place. What was it, Sylvester?"

"Have I said that there was anything out of place?" he asked coolly. "Didn't you hear any number of people speak in favor of the sermon?"

"But I know very well, Sylvester, that you're not pleased with it."

"Well?" he rejoined.

In the Brand household there were four sons, the youngest of whom had recently secured a position as assistant city engineer somewhere in Wisconsin ; the other three boys were at home, at least they took their meals at home and slept there. Though Mr. Brand had wished for one or two of his sons to enter his office and, having grown up in the business, to succeed him when the time

came, none of them could be persuaded to do it. Whether it was that they did not fancy the coal and wood business, or what was the difficulty, no one knew ; but each one of the three had tried it, and left the office in disgust, one to learn the printer's trade, another to become a clerk in a grocery store, while the third had not settled at anything definite yet. As can be readily imagined, there was not the most cordial feeling between the father and his sons.

"Why, mother, can't you see why father don't like the sermon? Mr. Driver was pleased with it, and that's reason enough," said Albert, the oldest son.

"Some people think they are very smart," was the father's reply.

"Now, Sylvester, if you saw anything wrong in the sermon, I think you might say so. Some men are so tantalizing !"

"Tantalizing? What have I done now, I'd like to know?"

"Done? You know very well what you're doing—keeping your opinion of the sermon all to yourself and acting so mysterious about it."

"Perhaps I have no opinion," said he.

"Sylvester Brand! you know as well as I do that you've got something in your mind which you're holding back."

"Well, suppose I had—would there be any great harm in that?"

"Harm? If you're not one of the most ag-

gravating men! If there's anything provoking in this world it's being mysterious about something."

"Never mind, mother," said Albert, "I'll go to church next Sunday and size up the new dominie. I can tell why father don't like him."

"I do wish you boys *would* go to church more," said Mrs. Brand, with a sigh. "You used to go every Sunday."

With the exception of Vincent, the youngest son, who became a member of the church while attending the University, Mr. Brand's sons had dropped out of the Sunday-school and from regular attendance at church when they were fourteen or fifteen years of age.

While the conversation at the Brand dinner table was in progress much after its usual fashion, several other groups were discussing the new pastor's sermon, in characteristic fashion.

"Papa, you should have been at church this morning; we had the *loveliest* sermon," said Miss Marshall with all of her usual overflowing enthusiasm. "Didn't we, mamma?"

"Yes, dear; Mr. Baldwin preached very acceptably," answered her mother. "Only a little of the dressing, Rufus," addressing her husband as he was serving her plate.

"Acceptably? Why, mamma, that's altogether too mild a term," said the daughter, dismayed at this lack of support.

"What was the sermon about, daughter?" asked Mr. Marshall, as he passed Ethel her plate.

"Oh, mamma can tell better than I can," said she.

"But I'm busy, dear. Go on and tell your papa what the sermon was about."

"I hardly know where to begin, papa," said Ethel. "But it was just grand! Of course I cannot begin to tell you all of it, but his subject was something about our lives being contagious. And then he was so earnest! He was so intent on making each of us feel what he felt and see what he was seeing. He just forgot all about himself! Oh, it was just grand! Have I got it right so far, mamma?"

"I think so, dear," the mother replied.

"But how did he develop his theme, daughter? What were his points?—you know ministers always have points in their sermons," said Mr. Marshall. Ethel was his only child, and though he had wished for a son, yet for these twenty years his daughter had remained the sole idol of his heart.

"What *was* his first point, mamma? I don't remember what he *did* say at first—I was busy looking at the minister's wife. I'm sure I shall like *her*!"

"Yes, Mrs. Baldwin has a good face," said Mrs. Marshall.

"If only she wasn't so short!" exclaimed Ethel, who was tall and graceful. "Isn't it too bad, mamma, that Mrs. Baldwin is so short?"

"But, my dear, she can't help it. We have to take our figures as they come to us," said Mrs. Marshall.

"Certainly, mamma; but I think it's just too bad for a minister's wife to be so short. One likes to look up to the minister's wife, you know. She should be grand and stately. But did you notice her complexion, mamma? I'm sure she had the *best complexion* this morning of any lady in the audience! I wonder what she uses?" Ethel looked at her mother inquiringly; but it was her father who replied.

"Doubtless," said he, "she takes plenty of exercise in the open air and doesn't eat too much candy and pastry."

"Now, papa! That's a horrid stab at me," cried Ethel. "Of course I know I *do* eat too many caramels—but why do you, you old dear, bring them home? And, mamma, did you notice Mrs. Baldwin's hair? I simply dote on such hair! Her hair is perfectly *exquisite*, papa!" exclaimed Ethel, misplacing the accent of her adjective.

"But the sermon, daughter; I'm waiting to hear something more of this wonderful sermon," said Mr. Marshall.

"Well, let me see," said Ethel, as if calling all her mental powers to the task; "of the first part I don't remember very much—I was enraptured with that auburn hair. But the last part of the sermon was grand, wasn't it, mamma?"

"I enjoyed the whole discourse very much,

dear," replied her mother, as she passed her husband the marmalade.

"Then tell us, daughter, what he said in the last part," suggested Mr. Marshall, who was always delighted with his daughter's descriptions.

"But I can't begin to tell it as the minister did, papa; but it was something about the Christ-life—didn't he say Christ-life, mamma?—something about the Christ-life being contagious; that religion meant catching the Christ-life and giving it to others. Wasn't that it, mamma?"

"I think his idea was something like that," replied the mother.

"Of course, papa, I don't mean that Mr. Baldwin used just the words that I used," said the girl, earnestly.

"I understand, daughter," said Mr. Marshall; "I am sure it must have been a sensible sermon, though I fear ministers do not always preach common sense."

Mr. Marshall was a keen student of human nature, a man of good business capacity, able to amass wealth but not always judicious in his investments. As president of the Tioga Gas and Electric Company, he had at various times gathered together considerable sums of money, but these had disappeared in fruitless speculations. No man in the city had a larger or a more tender heart; he was always helping somebody; and among his fellow-citizens none was held in higher esteem. Just why he never became a member of

the church, no one knew. His wife and daughter seldom thought of the fact ; for through all external relations, the eyes of those who love us see deep down into what we really are ; and this wife and daughter saw and were satisfied.

At the Stewarts', the dinner was begun, as usual, in comparative quiet. The father sat in his big chair at the head of the table ; on one side of him sat Elizabeth, the youngest daughter, on the other side, the eldest son ; Tom, Walter and Robert came in order of their age next to Duncan, with Cora and Mary on the opposite side, bringing Mary, who always poured the tea, next to her mother. There was one married daughter, Althea, whose chair next to Mary's was always placed at the table and more than half of the time was occupied by some friend who chanced either to be staying a few days with them, or who had merely dropped in with one of the younger members of the family. To-day, Miss Andrews, an intimate friend of Cora's, sat down to dinner with the family.

Mrs. Stewart was in many ways a remarkable woman. Marrying at an early age, she managed in the midst of her numerous and exacting household duties to give herself a broad and generous intellectual culture. This was possible only because many generations of New England ancestry had poured forth their finest mental and moral fibre into her inheritance. Her husband, a most

genial man though quite unlike his wife in many particulars, was very proud of her and of his children. The whole family, before the mother's partial loss of the use of her left leg, was very regular in attendance at church on Sunday mornings ; but for a few years the mother had been unable to walk more than a part of a block at a time, and frequently her husband remained at home with her while the rest of the family attended the morning worship. On this morning Mrs. Stewart had urged him not to remain with her but to go and hear the new minister.

"The children do not always get the full understanding of the sermon, Ephraim, and I would like very much to know what the new minister will say in his first discourse."

"Very well, mother ; I will go," said he. "I guess it's not too late to get in before the sermon begins." Selecting his favorite walking-stick, Mr. Stewart hastened to church and slipped into one of the seats near the door just as the preacher was beginning his sermon.

So David had eight listeners that morning who were all intent on carrying to "the little mother," as they fondly called her, the substance of the sermon ; and it is probable that these eight persons listened far more keenly than they would otherwise have done, had not each known that the mother would be sure to get at the bottom of the matter as to how much each one had brought away from the service.

When the last plate had been served and the meal was well under headway, the mother asked :

“And how was the sermon this morning?”

Immediately the general conversation around the table subsided ; and though the question was addressed to no one in particular, as the father had attended the service, the rest waited for him to speak first.

“The young man handled his subject very well, mother,” was all that he said.

There was silence for a quarter of a minute.

“And what did he say, Ephraim? Was the discourse logical?” said she, plunging at once into the very heart of the subject.

“It was a very meaty discourse, mother, a very meaty discourse ; and if I am not mistaken,” he continued, “the young man has a leaning toward what’s called the ‘newer thought.’”

“His text was John 10 : 10, ‘I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly,’” said Elizabeth, glad to make her contribution before some one else had gotten ahead of her.

“He used the Revised Version,” said Walter.

“His theme was The Contagion of Life, if I understood it correctly,” said Cora.

“Yes, I remember that,” said Elizabeth.

“Ephraim,” said Mrs. Stewart, “was this what you meant by his leaning toward the ‘newer thought’?”

“Not exactly, mother, though of course that

was a part of it. His whole sermon was different from the old type, not that I can explain just how it differed, but one could feel that there was a difference, mother."

By this time the tongues of all were loosened, and with such a tableful it was simply out of the question for each to wait his or her turn: all were eager to enlighten "the little mother" who seemed to have no trouble in catching what each one said though two or three did talk to her at the same time.

"Yes, I too felt that the sermon was different," said Mary.—"Duncan, will you please to start the bread around that way?—It struck me that Mr. Baldwin's conception of salvation was scarcely orthodox."

"Then I am classified," said Tom; "for Mr. Baldwin agreed with me perfectly."

"But it seems to me," persisted Mary, "that he reduces salvation to something very vague and indefinite—catching the Christ-life, I think he called it."

"Are you sure you understand what that term means?" asked Tom. "Perhaps you would not find fault with it if you did."

"Whatever it may mean, it does not express *my* idea of being saved," said Mary, somewhat warmly. "I for one want a more definite conception of salvation than that."

"Can a person who is sick have a more definite conception of getting well than the gaining of

strength little by little? Can a patient, sick with typhoid, get well in an instant?"

"But being saved is different," said Mary, insistingly.

"Perhaps not so different as you seem to think," said Tom with provoking deliberation. "Mr. Baldwin, you remember, said that salvation is to our spiritual nature what health is to our bodies. And he agrees with me exactly; but he's the first minister I ever heard make such a liberal statement."

"But what about the atonement? If we are saved by 'catching the Christ-life,' why was it needful for Christ to be punished for our sins? Why couldn't he just have come into the world and lived among people without being crucified?"

"It is very probable," said Tom, quietly, "that the atonement doesn't mean that Christ was punished in our stead."

Mrs. Stewart, wishing to divert this strain of the conversation into another channel, asked, "Then you quite agree with Mr. Baldwin, do you, Thomas?"

"Very heartily, mother," he replied, detecting her wish and governing himself by it.

This little act of Tom's revealed one of the secrets of this well-managed household—much of the machinery was noiseless and out of sight.

"Mother, let's ask the minister and his wife to take tea with us soon. Wouldn't it be great fun—

all of us asking him questions at once !” cried Cora, laughing at the thought of it.

“Isn’t his wife a nice little body ?” said Elizabeth.

“Not so very little, Puss,” said Duncan ; “she’ll weigh more than you do.”

“I mean she isn’t very tall,” corrected Elizabeth.

“She’s good natured, I’m sure,” said Cora.

“And not at all bad looking,” ventured Robert.

“Yes, she has a good look, but I wouldn’t call her handsome.”

“On most women I just cannot bear that color of hair, but on her it isn’t so bad.”

“For one, I’m thankful that red hair doesn’t run in the Stewart family,” ejaculated Cora.

“Red hair must be a great trial to a woman.”

“Did you hear any of those who were present expressing their opinion of the sermon ?” asked the mother, tactfully bringing the conversation back to the main subject.

“Oh, yes, I heard several speak in glowing praise of it,” replied the father.

“I heard Mr. Driver,” said Robert, “tell Deacon Long something about its being a ‘sensible’ sermon, that it contained ‘none of your pious nonsense.’ He tapped the deacon on the shoulder as he always does when he is well pleased.”

“Then one can easily tell what Mr. Brand’s attitude will be,” said Walter.

“Yes ; those two men are never on the same side.

of any question," said Mary. "I do wish you boys and father would attend the business meetings sometimes."

"Perhaps we shall," said Tom. "Though I have no particular taste for such meetings, yet I'll be willing to do almost anything if I can help make it possible for Mr. Baldwin to stay with us for any length of time."

"You may depend upon it," said Duncan, "that Mr. Brand is not the man to let things go on quietly with such a liberal man as Mr. Baldwin in our pulpit. In general, every one is well pleased, especially Mr. Driver. Consequently Mr. Brand will not be able to see any good in him."

"But what can he do?" asked Walter.

"Why, it's plain enough," answered Tom. "It is never the most difficult thing in the world for one person to create a centre of influence against a pastor, and Mr. Brand will seek to develop a suspicion concerning Mr. Baldwin's orthodoxy. And you might as well, in some congregations, kill a minister as to suspect his orthodoxy."

"Ephraim," asked Mrs. Stewart, "what is your opinion about the new minister's orthodoxy?"

"Well," answered the old gentleman, not willing to commit himself too definitely on this subject, "from this one sermon I cannot tell very much about it, mother; but it's certain he has a strong leaning toward the newer thought."

"And the majority of his congregation will like his preaching all the better for it," said Tom.

Two or three other strains of conversation were in progress around the table at the same time. When the dinner was ended, Mrs. Stewart had perhaps as good an understanding of David's sermon as had many who heard him speak.

Mrs. James gave her husband a fuller and a more detailed account of the service. "I couldn't help but wonder," said she, "what Mr. Brand and Deacon Long will think of such a modern discourse."

"The deacon, my dear, will not know that the sermon *was* modern unless some one tells him," observed her husband.

"Very probably," replied Mrs. James, smiling; "but with Mr. Brand it will be different. Having been a minister once himself, he has very decided opinions as to what constitutes sound doctrine."

"For the sake of the First Church here in Tioga," said Mr. James, "I am glad that Mr. Baldwin has a message of his own: that he is not content simply to repeat words which, though they meant something in the past, have now lost their value for this generation. But in view of the influence that Mr. Brand has in the church, I do not envy the young man his task."

"Yes, this church needs just such a man as Mr. Baldwin: some one must introduce the newer religious thought; it must come some time, though I fear that the one who introduces it will call

down Mr. Brand's strongest opposition upon him."

"But I think the newer thought could be very easily introduced if it were not for Mr. Brand; for Mr. Driver is delightfully modern in much of his religious thinking, though I shall be surprised if the young pastor does not find that he has a problem on his hands in this direction also."

"Yes, Mr. Driver is especially fond of having everything done in exactly the way it was done when he was a young man. While he is, as you say, liberal in his theology, no one could be more conservative in methods of church work."

"And Mr. Brand is just the opposite—extremely conservative in his religious opinions, yet in methods of church work no one could possibly surpass him in wanting to be up to date. Thus the two of them," continued Mr. James, "surely make a most interesting combination for a pastor to deal with. It's like steering between Scylla and Charybdis."

"It's really too bad that our church has been handicapped in this way so long."

"Yes," replied Mr. James, "and people generally outside of the church seem to recognize this. Only yesterday, while in the bookstore, Mr. Maxwell said something to me about it. He pointed out what every one knows very well—that during the past twenty-five years while the other churches of the city have more than doubled their membership, the First Church has barely

held its own ; and he was free to name Mr. Driver and Mr. Brand, especially the latter, as the cause of this lack of growth."

"I do hope, Lawrence, that Mr. Baldwin will be permitted to do something here. It must be very trying to a young minister to encounter such opposition, especially in his first pastorate."

In happy unconsciousness of all that was being said of them, David and Miriam were enjoying a delightful repast with Mr. and Mrs. Strong. Their hostess was one of those women who have the happy faculty of making it easy for one to feel and appear at one's best in their presence ; and their host, though very different from his wife, was also gifted in the rare art of entertaining. Mr. Strong was the university florist and professor of horticulture ; and though still under forty, he had attained a wide reputation as an authority in his line, owing to his successful experiments in hybridizing and to the able text-book he had recently written on that subject.

After the dinner, Mrs. Strong proposed a walk through the university conservatory : here her husband was at his best, and during a delightful hour he unfolded many interesting and surprising facts to his guests.

"What a happy home !" exclaimed Miriam, as she and David were walking back to their rooms.

"Yes," said David. "And I hope, sweetheart,

it will not be long before we are in a little home all by ourselves."

"Oh, I can hardly wait!" exclaimed Miriam. "And I'm so glad, dear, that we didn't—that I—I mean that you didn't come to Tioga alone."

VII

MY dear," said David a few days later, "this matter of selecting a house—we must decide at once."

Something had happened. David's manner and the unusual emphasis in his tone plainly indicated that.

Already the young bride was beginning to interpret the inner, unspoken life of her husband by the little changes in his expression and tone, an art in which she later gained great proficiency. With true wifely tact she now waited an instant before speaking: if David wished to disclose what was in his mind would it not be better for him to do so unquestioned?

"Yes," continued David—his tone was still very determined—"we must not wait any longer; we must select our house at once."

The day's heat had been very oppressive, for at Tioga the hottest summer weather usually comes in September. David and Miriam were walking along the shore of the lake. A gentle breeze, as it stirred the face of the lake, was causing the numerous small row boats, tied up here and there to the private landings, to beat the water with their prows as they bobbed up and down, keeping time to the rude music made by the water coming

in contact with the shore—a peculiar rhythmic sound impossible to forget when once it has sounded in your ears.

Within a few minutes those patient water-steeds would be unloosed and speeding toward the centre of the lake—some were already departing, going early to gain a certain coveted spot from which to watch the sun go down. This was the fashion of the town—to watch the sun set from the centre of the lake.

The origin of this custom was as follows: In the early days of Tioga a woman of unusual artistic insight and ability, a Miss Scott by name, some of whose works are now included in nearly all of the best American collections, had resided here for a time with a brother. One evening in early September, while crossing the lake, Miss Scott became enraptured with the beauties of the sunset. The boat was brought to a standstill and held as near as possible to a certain position while Miss Scott caught the peculiar coloring effect and transferred it to her folio. Evening after evening she returned to the same location, studying the sunset. Later she transferred the results of her study to canvas, giving, as it has been called by those qualified to speak with authority in such matters, a truly remarkable interpretation of a sunset as seen from the centre of the lake.

On leaving Tioga, Miss Scott presented her picture to the town, with the stipulation that it should always be accessible to the public. With due

ceremony the picture was received and given the most conspicuous place in the reading-room of the town library, where, since Miss Scott's pictures have become famous, many distinguished visitors have come to look at it. During the first decade of this picture's existence, however, the inhabitants of Tioga paid little attention to it; many even forgot its existence. But one day a stranger approached the city officials and offered to buy Miss Scott's sunset scene. The figure named by the stranger aroused their suspicions. They hesitated. The picture was a gift: ought they to sell it?

"You need a new library building. If you will transfer Miss Scott's picture to me, I will deposit money sufficient to erect one. In that way," said the stranger, "you will not be selling a gift but only changing its form."

Instantly the picture took on a new value. Everybody became interested in it. Men and women and children flocked to the reading-room to look at it. No, indeed, the city would not part with it, not even for two library buildings; and all subsequent cash offers were indignantly refused by public opinion.

And gradually the custom grew up of going out to the centre of the lake on the anniversary of the painting of the picture, to watch the sun set from the same spot from which the artist had seen it go down. Year after year the custom had grown. Some went because they remembered the occasion of the picture's birth; others because they had seen

the artist ; others because they had seen the picture ; while some went simply because it was a local custom.

David and Miriam had seen the picture ; and as they stood before it, drinking in its inspirational power, they too were seized with a desire to witness a sunset from the middle of the lake. In company with Mr. Palmer and Miss Fenwick they had enjoyed this treat on the evening before.

As they walked along the path by the shore, watching the boats depart, Miriam's position enabled her, without appearing to do so, to study her husband's face while apparently looking beyond him over the water. Never before had Miriam seen her husband look so determined, so fierce. What could be the matter ? But instead of questioning him, as a woman less wise might have done, Miriam said,

" And the three places we now have in mind are all so different—such different motives enter into the consideration of each."

" Yes ; but if I felt free," said David whose tone was softening somewhat, " if I felt free to follow my own inclinations in this matter, I would decide upon that cottage in the iron-foundry district. There, we could come in closest contact with a number of families who are wholly outside of the influence of the church. I'm sure that the only way a minister can help such people is to live among them : they will not come to him, he must go to them. But in discussing this subject with some of the members

of the church, I find that they do not take at all kindly to such a plan. There is a desire, on the part of some, for us to live where our residence will contribute something to the social standing of the church. At least this is what Mr. Brand intimated when he called my attention to that half-house on Fourth Street."

"Yes," said Miriam, "the subject has evidently been discussed; for Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Harrington, in speaking with me about our probable location, made some remark concerning the social importance of the pastor's residence."

"When one becomes pastor of a church," said David, "I suppose it is necessary to take into consideration the wishes of his congregation. But since this church, I suppose I should say our church, has no parsonage, the members ought to be willing for us to select our home wherever we desire. Some of the members undoubtedly have social ambitions for us."

"Is it not possible," asked Miriam, "that they do not understand our motive for wishing to live among the iron-foundry families?"

"Of course. There's just where the difficulty lies. But how are we to get them to understand it? Church life has become so conventional, and the pastor's activity is so restricted to certain professional duties, that the ordinary church is shocked if its pastor departs from the path beaten hard by his predecessors. But I'm inclined to think that it would do a church good to have a pastor just

go ahead and do whatever he wanted to do without regard as to whether it was conventional or not."

"Perhaps it would," said Miriam. "But I'm not sure, David, that he would do the most good in that way."

"Then you think, Miriam, we'd better not take that cottage?" he asked, still looking out over the waters. "That community, of all places in Tioga, is where we could doubtless be of greatest use."

"Of greatest use to our immediate neighbors, without doubt," replied Miriam. "But since we get our support from the church, are we not under obligations to take into consideration the wishes of those who support us? But then, David, you must decide this matter. You know best."

"Well," said he, "suppose we decide by the process of elimination. First, suppose we strike out that place on Fourth Street. To live there would be too expensive; it would cost too much in every way. So out goes all further consideration of that possibility."

"Together with the social ambitions of some of our members," added Miriam.

"But of not many, I hope. I'm beginning to think that Mr. Brand himself is at the bottom of this. He seems to have a great deal of influence in the church. But if anything further is said about it, we'll say that as soon as the church owns a parsonage on Fourth Street we shall be ready to move into it."

"The other churches own their parsonages, do they not?"

"Yes."

"Then that will be an excellent way to meet any further suggestions in that direction."

"Now for the cottage on Mill Street. I may as well confess, Miriam, that in thinking it over this afternoon I was on the point of deciding to take that cottage among the iron-foundry families whether the church liked it or not."

"On the point of deciding? What hindered you, David, from coming to a decision?" asked Miriam, looking up inquiringly.

"I wouldn't wonder," replied David, "if a certain little girl has had something to do with it. You see, Miriam," said he, picking up a willow twig lying by the side of the path, "it's like this: whenever I am about to decide any question, your judgment on the matter, what you would think about it, gets all mixed up with my own ideas, and ——"

"What a curious mixture it must be!" laughed Miriam. "But go on, dear."

"Well, I'm finding that in forming my judgments and decisions, your thoughts, Miriam, creep in and give color to all of my thinking."

"But, David, how did you know what my thoughts were? Personally, I would like very much if we could take that cottage on Mill Street."

"Oh, I could tell. Though I knew you would like to live there, that nothing would suit your

personal wish better, yet I could feel that you did not deem it wise for us to go against the wishes of the church. I had practically settled the matter before supper, settled it not so much in view of my own inclinations, as of your thought on the subject."

"But, dear, how could my judgment influence you when I had not expressed it?"

"You will have to tell; I can't. But I know that it did influence me," replied David. "Why sometimes, dearest, I can just feel what you would think about this or that, and I cannot get away from your thought in forming my own decisions. This has happened more than once."

"And I must confess to similar experiences," breathed Miriam lowly, as if touching upon a subject very precious to her. "Strange, isn't it, that the lives of two persons should so blend?"

"Indeed it is. I wonder if other married people have ever experienced anything like this?"

"Oh, undoubtedly. Have you never noticed that two elderly people who have lived happily together for many years even come to have the same thoughts on nearly all subjects?"

"Then we are in only the first stage of the process of blending," laughed David. "But to return to that cottage. We are agreed, are we not, Miriam, to strike that also from our list?"

"Did you not say, David, that you had already settled the matter this afternoon?" she replied slyly. "But it is not too late for me to agree

with you. Under the circumstances, it is probably the wisest thing to drop the cottage on Mill Street from further consideration. Perhaps at some later time we may be able to carry out our plans in that direction."

"With these two places disposed of, the question now is—Will Professor Wilson's house, on Monroe Avenue, suit us? It is pretty large, but we can get it very reasonably, while the professor and his family are abroad."

"I like the house very well," said Miriam; "and even without the two rooms up-stairs, reserved for storage, there is an abundance of room for us. But isn't the rent—two hundred dollars—almost more than we can afford to pay?"

"It does seem like making quite a hole in our salary," admitted David. "But under other conditions we'd have to pay at least three hundred dollars for that house. Rents are fearfully high here in Tioga. They always are in a university town where the institution has no dormitory system."

"I noticed," said Miriam, "when we were looking at that house, that the range and some other such things are left in the kitchen. If we rented almost any other house we'd have to buy these."

"Suppose, dear, we walk around to the agent's and get the key. It might be well for us to look through the house once more before making up our minds definitely. I want to get this matter settled just as soon as we can," said David, some-

thing of his former tone and fierceness becoming apparent.

Turning off from the path by the lake, they set out for the home of the real estate agent.

"I hope Mr. Robbins will not be out," he continued as they neared the agent's residence. "If we can get the key, and look through that house again, we may be able to decide the matter to-night."

"It would be nice if we could," replied Miriam. "So soon one gets tired of boarding."

"Yes," answered David, grimly, "one does soon get tired of it—especially when hash is set before you three times a week! If there's anything I do detest, it's *hash*! When we get to housekeeping, Miriam, if we ever have hash on our table, I'll ——"

"But we shall never have it, my dear," interrupted Miriam, quietly, as they turned up the walk to Mr. Robbins' residence.

How small a matter it sometimes takes to disturb the equilibrium of even so unworldly minded a person as a minister! Miriam smiled. But David's face was set with a look of grim determination. Fortunately, Mr. Robbins had not yet left for the lake; and getting the key to Professor Wilson's house, these two home-seekers were soon doing what you and I have probably done more than once—looking the house over a second or a third time to see if it would suit.

VIII

IF our knowledge of life were limited to certain interpretations commonly found in books, it would be easy to draw the conclusion that the culmination of all human interests is marriage, and that beyond this event there is nothing worthy of being recorded. But to what a different conclusion a study of life itself leads ! From observation, or better still, experience—vastly more reliable sources than the imaginings of any man (or woman)—we may learn the true place of marriage : it is rather a new beginning than the culmination of life. While courtship, with all of its interests, its alternating joys and sorrows, its expectations and disappointments, its hopes, its fears, its compromises and adjustments, its contests, its victories, its glow and its radiance, is a truly important period in the life of the individual, a period whose significance is often far too lightly esteemed ; yet does not courtship itself gain its importance and its significance from the fact that it is but preparatory to a larger life, of which marriage is the beginning ?

But faithfully to interpret life after marriage is a most difficult task. Here the problems become more complicated ; the interests more vital ; the joys and sorrows and fears and hopes and contests

and adjustments and expectations are more closely entwined about the deeper things of existence. Two lives are now joined for better or worse. Will the union aid or hinder the working out of the destiny of each? When a chemist unites two substances whose action and reaction are not fully understood, with what intense interest, what abated breath he watches the experiment! Will there be a violent explosion? Will the elements utterly refuse to coalesce? or will they blend quietly? and what will be the exact nature of the new combination? How absorbed the observer as, with these questions in mind, he watches the result! And marriage is not altogether unlike the union of two such substances.

Having rented Professor Wilson's house on Monroe Avenue, David and Miriam filled the days of the following week with unusually busy hours, as they made preparations for entering their new home. It is no easy task (so I have been told) to fit out a home *de novo*, even when one has an ample bank account on which to draw; but under such circumstances the task is relatively light compared with the one which now was engaging the thought and the strength of this young minister and his brave little wife; for they were face to face with the problem of trying to furnish a house empty-handed.

You whose parents, on one side or the other, furnished your first home may feel inclined to commiserate the lot of this newly married couple. But

do nothing of the kind. They do not need your pity. Though every article bought represents some sacrifice, something else given up, how much dearer to them is each piece of furniture because it has to be so carefully considered before being purchased! Indeed, it is you who have never had any such beginning in life as this, you who know nothing of the luxury of such an experience, *you* who should be commiserated! For some pleasures cannot be counterfeited nor duplicated in any other form. It is only the barefooted boy getting the cows on a cold frosty morning in early autumn who knows the absolutely unparalleled pleasure of warming his feet on the warm spot where a cow has lain!

Of course, at their wedding, David's friends had remembered him in much the usual manner; and Miriam also had received a number of gifts. But all these, while dearly cherished for the affection they represented, would go but a little way in the furnishing of a house. David had just opened the two boxes, not very large ones, in which their presents had been shipped from the East.

"My dear," said he, arranging four similar packages side by side on the table, "not every newly married couple begins housekeeping so well supplied with teaspoons."

"We might exchange two of the sets for something else," said Miriam, examining the cards attached to each of the packages. "But whose gift shall they be? Belle's or Gertrude's or Blanche's

or Mary's? I cannot bear to think of parting with any of them."

"Nor shall you, dearest," replied David. "We'll keep the four sets, and what's more, we'll keep every gift we've got." David was arranging another row on the table. Already there were five similar articles side by side. He was hunting in the box for the sixth.

Finding it, David placed the article by the side of its five mates, and taking a step backward, stood viewing the array. Though they were of different design, and varied a little in shape and size, these six gifts, all from different people, belonged unmistakably to the same genus, that of soup-ladles. Six silver soup-ladles!

"No," said he, making a mock heroic gesture at the row, "we'll not part with a single one of our presents."

"But, David, six soup-ladles! We can never make use of that many. With the teaspoons it is different," protested Miriam.

"Yet I cannot think of bartering, yes, bartering is the right word, I cannot think of bartering one of our gifts,—no, not if there were twenty-six soup-ladles among them. Who can tell the serious consequences that would probably follow in the train of such an act?"

"Serious consequences, David?" asked Miriam, not wholly penetrating his fun.

David was scowling terribly in his effort to keep his face straight.



"Yes, serious consequences," he repeated solemnly. "For if a man will barter his wedding presents, gifts about which cling the tenderest of sentiments, if he will traffic with these things, what will he not do? Is country or honor or truth safe in the hands of such a man? Would he not also barter these if a suitable opportunity presented itself? Part with one of my wedding presents? No; not if they were *all* soup-ladles!"

Miriam was unwrapping a pickle-dish. David looked into her face, but it was as non-committal as his own.

"Why," he continued, "I can see Henly racking his brain and spending sleepless nights in his effort to decide what present he should send us. I can see him going from store to store, the trial of men clerks, the despair of salesladies. What care, what anxiety rests on his brow! At last one day, having exhausted the patience of the head clerk, who for an hour or more had been vainly endeavoring to suit him, Henly is handed over to the proprietor. This superior person has had many years of experience with such cases. In two minutes he has helped Henly to a decision. In five minutes more Henly leaves the store with the article properly packed for shipping. In the hands of the proprietor, a happy thought has come to him. He recalls that I am fond of soup. 'A soup-ladle,' says he to the proprietor; 'how would that do for a wedding present?' 'Just the thing!' replies that august person. 'No one else will probably

think of sending your friend a soup-ladle.' What a burden of anxiety and indecision rolls from Henly's shoulders as he pays for his purchase! His stalwart frame stands erect once more. No, Miriam; I cannot bring myself to barter his gift. It would be worse than sacrilege!"

David was trying to look dignified; but as Miriam caught his eye, she burst into laughter.

"And the other five?" she asked.

"Each undoubtedly represents some similar experience," replied David. "They're all from some of the boys, all except one; and you can have no idea, Miriam, how difficult it is for a young man to select a wedding present, especially if he hasn't much money to invest in one."

"More difficult than for a woman, do you think?"

"Oh, I'm sure of it," said he, placing a toothpick holder which he had just unpacked, on the table. He stood a moment looking again at the row of soup-ladles. "I'll tell you, Miriam, what we can do with these," said he.

"Well?"

"Why, when some of our friends are to be married, we can just pass them on. Five weddings! A soup-ladle for each. Think of it! From what perplexity of making selections these five extra soup-ladles will save us!"

As the unpacking continued, more articles of fancy silverware, dainty cups and saucers, some exquisite pieces of hand-painted china, and several

nondescript articles of fancy needlework were arranged on the table; while on the floor near the wall, David stood up the half-dozen pictures. In the bottom of the last box were several books—some well-bound copies of the poets, a set of George Eliot, and a well-worn volume of Spurgeon's sermons, this last from an estimable lady who had been David's first Sunday-school teacher.

So much for a beginning. The unpacking of the presents had taken place in the kitchen of the new home, and they were piled up on the table belonging to that room. The house had been thoroughly cleaned, and as Miriam was putting some of the things away in the cupboards, David carried the empty boxes to the basement.

"Now Miriam," said he, "we'll take that inventory of what we haven't got."

David produced a little memoranda book from his vest pocket, and on the top of the first blank page he wrote the word "Kitchen."

"I think, dear, you'd better allow two pages for the kitchen," said Miriam, as he was about to write the word "Dining-room" on the next leaf. "The list for the kitchen will include so many little, inexpensive articles, you know."

"And how much for the other rooms?"

"One page will be sufficient."

On the tops of other leaves, David wrote respectively such words as "Sitting Room," "Bed Rooms," "Study," "Hall," "Guest Chamber," "Parlor."

"But I doubt, Miriam, whether we'll ever get to the parlor if we keep within our limit," said David as he penciled the word.

"Then, dear, we can let the furnishing of the parlor go," she answered, bravely.

"But, Miriam," persisted David, "how will it look for us to have no parlor? All the ladies of the church will call on us, and we should have a suitable place in which to receive them."

"I have thought of that, David," she replied; "and our sitting-room will do very nicely for a while—at least until we can furnish a parlor without going in debt for it. I have a horror of debt."

"Oh, of course it would be better if we had the money to pay down for all of our furniture; but Mr. Cooper—I saw him this morning about it—very kindly offers to let me have from his department store whatever we may need, and says we can pay him so much a month. I like this plan much better than borrowing the money from Mr. Driver."

"Yes; so do I, though it was very nice of Mr. Driver—his offering of his own accord to let you have the money for a year without interest. But, dear," continued Miriam, earnestly, "if you think best to get our furniture of Mr. Cooper and to pay him as he suggests, we should be just as careful, shouldn't we, to keep within our limit?"

"Oh, yes; I suppose so," answered David, a little reluctantly. "But if we wanted to, we could

now go fifty or a hundred dollars over, just as well as not. You see, Miriam, we are sure of our salary every month. I would not think of incurring any debt for furniture if my salary was not absolutely certain and large enough to justify my doing so. While we can't get everything, of course; yet on a thousand dollars a year we can afford to furnish our home reasonably well, I think."

To David, who had never before received a definite salary, and whose expenses hitherto had never exceeded four hundred dollars annually, his present salary of a thousand a year seemed a resource almost inexhaustible. He knew of many ministers who were living on much less than that amount, ministers with large families, too. Surely it was not necessary for him to economize too severely. This he had had to do all his life. But now it was different.

Miriam had thus far succeeded in keeping the proposed limit of their furnishings down to two hundred and fifty dollars. David had wanted to make it at least three hundred; Miriam thought two hundred ought to be enough. They had compromised on two hundred and fifty; but David was being held to this figure rather unwillingly, now that he had found it possible to get whatever he wanted at Cooper's, on the instalment plan.

They spent the whole afternoon making entries on the various pages of David's note-book. Of all the problems in higher mathematics none had,

ever been so difficult as the one now before them ! Time after time these lists were revised, something left out of this room in order to put some other more needed article into that one. The "limit" was severely tested without making a single entry on the parlor-page. David reluctantly yielded to Miriam's judgment and no provision was made for the furnishing of the parlor.

In making out the list for David's study, Miriam had insisted on his selecting a much more expensive chair than he had intended to get ; but he would not consent to it. He declared that he just *would* have his way about the chair in which he was to sit. If she was bound to let the parlor go unfurnished, he would buy the cheapest chair he could get for his study.

But at last the furniture was ordered and the new home began to take on a definite character, the two young people attending to all the work of getting the rooms in order.

"Why, David ! This will never do !" exclaimed Miriam, coming into the sitting-room where her husband had just finished hanging some pictures.

"Never do ? Why, dear, what's the matter ? Aren't they hung straight ?" asked David who was beginning to mistrust his own ability of arranging anything in a room, for Miriam always had to give a few womanly touches to whatever he did before it looked just right. Before Miriam had come into the room he was certain the pictures were all right.

"Now, Miriam," said he, surveying his work from the middle of the floor, "these pictures are hung as straight as any one could hang them; except perhaps that one in the corner by the window—that does seem to be just a little too much to the right," said he, adjusting the wire of the picture in question.

"But, you dear old lover boy!" cried Miriam, "can't you see that they must every one of them come down?"

"Come down?" echoed David, nonplussed.

"Yes, every one of them must come down. That dark one has too little light on it; those two yonder do not harmonize well; and this one is altogether too high."

As Miriam pointed out these defects, David instantly recognized the justice of her criticism in each case. Mounting the step-ladder, David soon had the pictures all rearranged according to Miriam's suggestions.

"There! Doesn't that look better?" asked Miriam, as David stood by her side, looking at the new arrangement.

"No-o," answered David, shaking his head; but from the look in his eyes and the way he said it, Miriam knew that he meant just the opposite.

"You old dear, your eyes betray you!" cried Miriam. "Of course you think it is better!" She stood before him looking up into his face.

"My eyes betray me, do they?" said he. "Then they must tell you lots of things; they must tell

you how much I would like to"—and he quickly enfolded her in his arms and printed a kiss on her cheek.

"Ah, the finishing touch!" cried a merry voice from the hallway. "You must pardon me," continued Mrs. Strong, advancing and blushing very prettily at the confusion of the married lovers before her; "but the hall door stood so invitingly open that I came in without stopping to ring. I'm curious to know," she went on sweetly, talking more with her eyes than with her voice, "if you finish settling each room in that way?"

"Why, no, Mrs. Strong; we hadn't thought of it before," answered David, rallying. "But thank you ever so much for the suggestion. Come on, Miriam, let's go back and put the 'finishing touch' on the rest of the rooms."

"Be still, you silly boy!" said Miriam. "You must be good or you'll have to stand up in a corner."

"With my face to the wall?" asked David, plaintively, trying to imitate a little child.

"Yes; with your face to the wall," said she, laughing at him.

"Then I'll be good," said he submissively. But as Miriam turned to address Mrs. Strong, David quickly stole a kiss from her other cheek.

"What *shall* I do, Mrs. Strong, with such a naughty boy?" asked Miriam. "But come," she added, "let us show you the rooms we have already settled."

Together they stepped through the archway into the dining-room, David holding aside the portières as the ladies preceded him.

"What a cheery dining-room!" exclaimed Mrs. Strong, taking in at a glance the table neatly set for two, a beautiful table-fern gracing the centre, and the simplicity and harmony of the whole arrangement of the room, with its unmistakable air of refinement, reflecting the character of the one who had given it form. "What a fine view from this window looking out over the lake! I've always regretted that our house has no view of the lake, at least none to speak of save from the front veranda."

"You may consider that circumstance, Mrs. Strong, a part of your good fortune," said David, approaching the ladies as they were looking out of the window. "Do you know," said he, "this view of the lake came very nearly plunging the members of this household into an interminable controversy?"

"Indeed?" said Mrs. Strong, looking inquiringly from one to the other.

"Yes," said David, "it was this way: Miriam wanted the table turned around the other way," indicating with his hand. "But both of us wanted to sit at this end——"

"With your backs to the window—how generous!" interrupted Mrs. Strong.

"Yes; and Miriam wouldn't give in."

"And neither would you," retorted Miriam,

good-naturedly. "Don't you think, Mrs. Strong, that it's a man's place to yield in such things to his wife?" she asked.

Mrs. Strong, with intuitive diplomacy, replied, "Certainly, he should, my dear; but we women would think less of a man who always did it."

"There! there!" they exclaimed in the same breath.

"You should have yielded to me."

"But you would think less of me if I had," he replied, glad to keep up his part of the pleasantry.

"So you compromised by turning the table about? Well, I think this side view is all the better. How interesting this home-making must be to you two people! It almost makes me want to begin all over again."

In each room Mrs. Strong saw evidences of economy and likewise of good judgment and a refined taste. Her praise and words of appreciation were unbounded.

"You are a model housekeeper, I'm sure," she said to Miriam, whose glowing cheeks took on a very pleased expression at this honest praise. "Do you like housework?" she asked. "I am sure you do."

"Yes," answered Miriam; "I am very fond of it."

"I wish I were; but I am not."

"Indeed?"

"No; I cannot bear it. I should have been a

man. I think I should have liked to be a minister," glancing at her pastor.

They were entering David's study.

"And here is where you will write your sermons—our sermons, I should have said. What a privilege it must be to give one's life to the study of religious subjects, Mr. Baldwin."

"It is a privilege," replied David, gravely; "but one from which many men honestly shrink."

"I like to hear you say that!" she replied, seriously. "Religious knowledge, I suppose, is sometimes gained at great cost."

"Yes," said he, wondering at her insight.

"But it's worth having at any cost—this deeper knowledge of life, and of its meaning and its destiny?"

"Yes, it's worth having at *any* cost," repeated David, again wondering how far this woman's experience had led her into an appreciation of his own position.

"I want to tell you," continued Mrs. Strong, "that I have been so interested in your sermons. I suppose," said she, turning to Miriam, "I suppose this is because he has unfolded many of my own immature thoughts."

"I think most people enjoy sermons in which the pastor can do that. I know I always do," answered Miriam.

"But the trouble is," said David, "nearly every congregation to-day is divided into two classes,

and what feeds the one often means very little or nothing to the other."

"I know that is so," replied Mrs. Strong. "Now, our former pastor was a very good man—no one could possibly find any fault with his goodness ; but somehow a great many of his sermons didn't mean anything at all to me. And every once in a while I would get so hungry for a sermon that did feed me, that I just had to go where I could get it—to some other church."

"I shall know what's the matter," laughed David, "if you are not at church some Sunday morning. But seriously, Mrs. Strong, I quite agree with you ; I have done the same thing myself."

"Oh, I think it will not be necessary for me to run away any more—not so long as you preach the kind of sermons we've been having," answered Mrs. Strong.

"That's very kind of you to say so, Mrs. Strong," said David.

"So many questions come up in my mind sometimes when I am thinking on religious subjects. During the last year or two I have often wished for a pastor or some one in sympathy with modern thought with whom I could talk over my perplexities. Many of the older conceptions and statements mean absolutely nothing to me now. I am not at all settled as to just what I do believe. Would you mind," Mrs. Strong asked, looking up at David, "would you mind my running in to

ask you some questions once in a while? It would be such a relief!"

"No, indeed," replied David, eager to be of assistance to any one in that trying period of transition in religious opinions. "I shall be only too glad, Mrs. Strong, to give you what little light I may have on any question that at times perplexes you."

"Yes," added Miriam, seconding her husband's invitation, "why shouldn't we feel as free to consult our pastor as our physician—that is, if the pastor is one whom we care to consult? Unfortunately, I never had such a pastor."

"Until now!" laughed David.

"Oh, I used to get all wrought up over some of these religious subjects," continued Miriam. "I used to think I was very wicked because I couldn't believe everything just as our minister presented it."

"But now?" asked Mrs. Strong.

"Oh, I think I agree thoroughly with the preaching I've heard since coming to Tioga. You know, I never heard Mr. Baldwin preach before we were married."

As Mrs. Strong was leaving, Miriam and David again urged her to drop in on them whenever she wished to do so.

"Mr. Baldwin will be glad to have you interrupt him whenever he can serve you. We have both passed through some trying experiences in adjusting our religious beliefs to modern conditions,

and I feel that he will be able to say just the right word in helping one to understand the newer thought. He has been of such help to me." Miriam followed her friend to the door.

Among other things, Mrs. Strong had learned that the Baldwins were not intending to furnish their parlor, and that they were planning to have their first meal in their new home on the following evening.

IX

MRS. STRONG, on her way home from the Baldwins', stopped to see Mrs. Driver; and within a few minutes the two ladies were in the midst of a most absorbing conversation. Mr. Driver, on entering the room where the ladies were chatting, was also admitted to the council, and heartily expressed his approval of the project under consideration, which was that the church families should each make some contribution toward stocking the pastor's pantry with the usual household supplies.

"The church insisted on his marrying," said Mrs. Strong, explaining their purpose to Mr. Driver, "when perhaps he was scarcely prepared financially to take such a step."

"I have my doubts about his needing very much urging to get married," said Mr. Driver, drily. "But *that's* neither here nor there. I admire that little woman—his wife. She's got more common sense than two ordinary women,—just the kind of woman for a minister's wife."

"My husband, you see, is quite taken with our pastor's wife," said Mrs. Driver, highly pleased that it was so. "Mr. Baldwin is certainly to be congratulated on his choice. Everybody speaks in the highest praise of Mrs. Baldwin. And now about these little remembrances we are to send

them: we should avoid too many duplications, should we not?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Strong, "we must try to send in as great a variety as possible; and as you say, not too many duplicates."

"And these orders should all be delivered to-morrow afternoon?"

"Yes."

"Well," said Mr. Driver, withdrawing to the library, "the rest of the family can send whatever they wish. I will order a jar of butter. That little woman shall have a jar of the best butter in the market."

"I'll send some fruit," added Mrs. Driver,— "some apples, they're always acceptable, and some grapes."

Mrs. Strong made a note of these articles. "And we will send an assortment of breakfast foods," said she, after a moment's reflection.

By the aid of the 'phone the ladies at once reached a number of the church families, and Mrs. Strong's list grew apace; and that evening at the midweek service many more additions were made to it, while word was sent to other families not present.

Just after dinner on the following day, David had their trunks and other belongings transferred from their boarding-house to their new home. That morning Miriam had left a modest order at one of the grocery stores, with the request that it be delivered in the early part of the afternoon.

While busily engaged in unpacking her trunk and getting her own room settled, she heard a knocking at the kitchen door.

"The groceryman," said she to herself. "I'm glad he has come so early." She paused to watch the boy as he began to unload his basket on her kitchen table.

"But this is not my order!" she exclaimed, seeing before her a number of articles she had no thought of buying. "There's a mistake, somewhere. You have stopped at the wrong house."

The boy consulted the duplicate order. "This number is 405 Monroe Avenue, ain't it?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Miriam.

"Then there ain't no mistake, ma'am," said he. "See, that's what it reads on the order—405 Monroe Avenue."

"But I haven't ordered these things," persisted Miriam. "The mistake must have been made at the store."

"I can't say as to that, ma'am," said the boy.

"The lady who gave the order will be disappointed if she does not get these things in time," continued Miriam. "So you'd better find out at once where they belong."

"Very well, ma'am," said he, loading up his basket again with a package of coffee, a small bag of sugar, a can of cocoa, some celery, a small basket of peaches, and some canned stuff.

Miriam returned to her work. She was beginning to get just the least impatient with her grocer, when another delivery wagon stopped in front of the house. The boy brought in two baskets. As he began to pile the contents of the first on the table, Miriam recognized the articles she had ordered. But the boy unloaded the other basket also.

"No, no," said she. "These things do not belong here," indicating the contents of the second basket.

"But the order has the same name and address," said the boy.

"What can this mean?" she remonstrated, examining the piece of paper which he held before her.

"Perhaps the mister gave the order," suggested the boy.

"I—but my husband knows that we never use tea," said she, inspecting the packages in question.

"Mebbe he wanted some on hand for company."

"And that white flour—he knows we are to use only the whole wheat. I—and three kinds of fresh fruit at once! Such extravagance! No," said Miriam, turning to the boy, "I am positive that Mr. Baldwin never gave this order."

"Well, mistakes do sometimes occur," said the boy, philosophically. "But I'll just leave these things here and pick them up on my way back. Sorry, ma'am, to cause you any trouble. But this

don't occur very often. The boss is very particular, and he'll make it hot for somebody," said the boy as he disappeared.

Miriam returned again to her work. David was spending the afternoon in the city library and would not be back till about five-thirty. In less than a quarter of an hour there was another rapping at the kitchen door. Hastening to see what was wanted, Miriam was astonished to find another deliveryman awaiting her. He asked her where she wanted this bag of potatoes put? And without waiting for her to reply, the boy ran back to his wagon and got a large basket piled full of various articles, which he began to unload on the kitchen floor. Miriam stood speechless; but the boy was too busy to notice her very much. He was late and must make up for lost time.

While he was thus engaged, another delivery boy entered unannounced and began to unload his basket. Packages of oat flakes, shredded wheat, and other breakfast foods, wafers, cakes, canned corn, canned tomatoes, canned peas, canned salmon, canned beef, canned soups, a sack of sugar, some tea, some coffee, and a number of other packages whose label or aroma did not reveal their contents, were piled up on the kitchen floor. At this juncture a third boy appeared with a bushel of apples. Putting the bag down on the floor, he hastily withdrew and in a moment returned with his basket, which was also heaped up with small packages. The other boys watched

him as he added its contents to the pile already on the floor.

"But who sent you with all of these things?" cried Miriam, utterly forgetful that she was the wife of a minister. "It cannot be that my husband has done this!"

The boys laughed, knowingly, and winked at one another. "Shouldn't wonder, ma'am, if the church people had something to do with it," ventured one of them, as the three left the room.

"Jiminy cracks!" cried another, slapping his knee, as they turned the corner away from the kitchen door, "but wasn't she s'prised!"

"Jest mighty nigh took away her breath!"

"She couldn't speak for a minute! My! But it was *rich*!"

"If only the preacher hisself had been there! What'll he say, when he sees all them s'plies?"

"If his wife only don't tell him, he'll be mad, as mad as a wet hen, I'll bet."

"Why, Bill?"

"Why? That's plain 'nough. He'll think he's got the most extrav'gant woman in the state!"

The boys were climbing into their wagons.

"Say, Bill?" called one in an undertone. "Wouldn't you like to be a preacher? Think of gettin' all that stuff without having to pay for it!"

"But being a minister ain't such a snap after all. They have to send all their money to the heathen," was the reply.

"Then that's why the church folks has to give

'em things—hadn't thought of that," said the other, as the wagon started down the avenue.

Three or four more delivery wagons stopped before David returned from the library. Miriam let everything remain spread out on the kitchen floor, as the boys had left it; and when David returned, she met him in the hall, saying that her order had been delivered and for him to look at the things and see if they were all right.

"The packages are in the kitchen, dear. You can step in and look at them. I'll be with you in a moment," said she, going into the sitting-room on some pretense.

"Why of course they are all right, dearest. Anything that you've ordered is all right. I hope you didn't stint——" but the sentence was never finished. "Shades of the patriarchs!" he exclaimed, as his eyes rested on the array of packages piled up miscellaneously on the kitchen floor. "Whatever possessed her to order all this!" he added beneath his breath. He remembered that she had asked him to accompany her to a grocery and to help in selecting the supplies; he remembered also that he had begged off, telling her that she knew best what they needed, and for her to order whatever she wished.

His heart sank within him. This was her first purchase alone since their marriage. He'd had such perfect confidence in her judgment. But now! He groaned as he thought of it—such extravagance! He could not understand it. It was

so unlike Miriam to order all of these things. His face was a study as he stood thus, the object of conflicting emotions. Perhaps he'd have to look after ordering the supplies himself in the future. It would doubtless pain Miriam if he expressed dissatisfaction with what she had done. He would not say anything about the matter now. It might be after all that he did not understand how many things were needful at the beginning of housekeeping. But—and his eye ran over more than a dozen packages of breakfast food—he was utterly nonplussed. Still he must not appear to be displeased.

Miriam entered the kitchen and stood watching him.

"I wish you had gone along, David; when one is just beginning, ordering supplies is no small task, as you can well imagine."

"Yes, it must be quite a task," said he. He did not say that in his own mind he was determined to go along or to do the ordering himself hereafter. "Are you sure, dear, that you ordered enough?" he asked. He would say almost anything rather than let her know how he felt. But, foolish man that he was to attempt to deceive his wife, Miriam interpreted his tone and expression and understood them, while his words said quite the opposite.

"Oh, we can easily get along now, dear, for a day or two, don't you think so? Then we can order the rest. But I fear, David, you think I have

already ordered somewhat extravagantly. I see it in your face ! ”

“ Really, dearest, I don’t think any such thing,” persisted the poor fellow, striving in every way he knew to keep from hurting his wife’s feelings. “ Why,” said he, “ if I’d been with you we’d ordered all this and perhaps more—not one package less, I assure you, dearest.” David was dangerously near the dividing line between truth and falsehood. Indeed it was doubtful on which side of that line he stood at that moment. But the wistfulness and simulated anxiety on Miriam’s face had driven him to it.

“ After these things were delivered,” said Miriam, “ it did seem as if we could have started in on less. I was so afraid you’d think I’d been extravagant. And you know, dearest, that would break my heart.”

Drawing her head to his shoulder David caressed her rosy cheek. “ Extravagant ! ” he exclaimed. “ What put such an idea into your mind ? I am sure that you are the most economical little woman in all this world.”

“ And you’ll trust me just the same to do the ordering after this ? ”

“ Certainly, sweetheart.” With that face looking up into his own, it was impossible for him to give any other reply.

“ For I couldn’t stand it, dearest, to have you distrust my judgment in such things,” said Miriam, disengaging herself from his arms. “ Every woman,

you know, likes to feel that her husband has full confidence in her judgment."

"Why certainly. That's no more than natural and right," he assented.

"But, David, you old lover boy! I'm sure you were displeased when you first saw all these things piled up on the table and on the floor. Now, confess! Weren't you?"

"Well, I," began David hesitatingly, as he sorted out the various kinds of breakfast foods. "At first I did think the pile was rather large. But of course no up to date family could begin housekeeping on less than eleven different kinds of breakfast foods. But what's this—tea, coffee, white flour? And here are four bottles of olives, three baskets of assorted fresh fruits, two packages of English walnuts, three twenty-five pound sacks of sugar, five packages of breakfast cocoa and four packages of biscuit! Sweetheart!" cried David. "I am positive you never ordered all these things!"

"I'm somewhat in doubt about it myself, come to look them over," confessed Miriam.

"Then how in the name of father Abraham did they get into this kitchen?"

"Here's what I did order," said Miriam, pointing to her modest quantity set on one side of the table. "How the rest came here I am not altogether certain. But I have my suspicions."

"The church people?"

"Yes."

"How kind and thoughtful of them!" he exclaimed drawing Miriam again to him, while his brow cleared up as if by magic. "But to think, dearest, for a quarter of a minute I——"

"But, dear, you had the best of reasons. I know it was almost cruel of me to leave you under the impression that I had ordered all of this. You endured the ordeal nobly. But come now to your reward." She led the way to the dining-room.

It was their first meal with each other by themselves. Through the windows the mellow light of an early October sunset streamed and played about Miriam's head, making her rich auburn hair, always one of her charms, a crown of silken gold. In the boarding-house they had been accustomed to sitting side by side; but now as David took his seat opposite his wife it seemed to him that no woman had ever before looked half so beautiful. In her eyes was kindled a love-light, imparting a radiance to her whole face; in her hair the sunbeams were all entangled so that he could not tell which was sunbeam and which was hair, the blending was so exquisite.

Just outside, and within view, though not obstructing their range of vision to the lake, stood two or three oak trees arranged in holiday attire as if in honor of the occasion; and in the branches of one of them sat a squirrel eating an acorn and chattering to his mate in the other tree. There was a little breeze passing over the surface of the

lake, roughening the water just enough to make it reflect the sunlight like many little mirrors set at different angles. The two or three fleecy clouds on the western horizon were blushing with unfeigned coyness as the sun was giving them his good-night caress. If this were the only spot where such a sunset could be seen, men would cover it with gold, if necessary, in order to call it their own. To David and Miriam it was the only spot. The glory of it filled their souls as for a moment they sat drinking in the beauty of the scene. Bowing their heads, David gave thanks.

"How good it seems to be alone, to have a dining-room all to ourselves," observed Miriam. "I am sure we shall be very happy, dear, in our new home-nest."

"Happy? Why I never enjoyed a meal like this before. Such a feeling of satisfaction to sit down to a table where one is confident that he will not be confronted with a dish of ——"

"David!" interrupted Miriam, shaking her finger at him playfully. "You were about to speak a word which must never, never be uttered in this dining-room."

X

ONE of David's newly found joys after his marriage was their reading of some book together, or rather his listening to Miriam while she read to him, during the evenings in which there were no demands of the church to disturb them. These evenings together were all too few. The midweek service, the committee meetings and other evening gatherings of the church for one purpose or another, together with the various social functions to which they were being invited outside of the church, left sometimes only two evenings a week to be spent by themselves. David was heartily interested in his work, yet it must be confessed he was more in love with his wife; and to watch her face while she read to him from some interesting book was to feed upon such food as the dwellers on high Olympus had never tasted. His soul thrilled within him as he would sit and watch Miriam as she read. She seemed the embodiment of purity, innocence, goodness, love; and to look upon these, when one's heart is open to their message, is to be made a better man.

David had seated himself in his easy chair some distance from the reading lamp in the centre of their cozy sitting-room, and was waiting Miriam's coming. When she entered the room a moment

later, it was with some unfinished sewing in her hands. David looked up inquiringly.

"I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind reading this evening, dear; I have some sewing which I feel must be finished this week; and this evening is the only time I can give to it," said Miriam, handing David the copy of "Janice Meredith" they were enjoying together.

"But, sweetheart, can't you let the sewing go? You know how much more I enjoy it when you read. Must it really be finished to-night? I fear the little girl is getting too industrious."

"No fear of that!" she laughed. "But, David, I must do some of my sewing during the evenings; for I do not feel free to go to Mrs. Strong's any more."

"To Mrs. Strong's?" inquired David, somewhat mystified.

"Yes; you see I've been doing the most of my sewing on her machine and to-day while I was using it, it broke."

"Broke?"

"It was an old machine and something just gave way. Mrs. Strong was very nice about it, yet I feel dreadfully to have it happen."

"Of course you insisted on getting it fixed?"

"Certainly; but Mrs. Strong wouldn't hear to it. She said it would have happened anyway."

"I am sorry," said David, as he drew his easy chair nearer the reading lamp. "I am sorry that the accident happened. I hadn't thought of it

before, sweetheart, but we'll have to get a sewing-machine, won't we?"

"As soon as we can afford it, dear. We haven't the money saved up yet."

David opened the book and read for an hour while Miriam diligently pursued her sewing, stitch by stitch. The evening finally wore away without bringing to David its usual enjoyment, for the few glances he had stolen of Miriam's face did not thrill him; the expression was not of the same elusive character as when she was reading; it was when some incident of the story stirred her emotions that her face carried such depth of feeling, such richness of inner life as one seldom sees, save in some great painting of some great master. But as she bent over her sewing, her expression was commonplace, though even then she was good to look upon.

For some time David had been wondering what he should get Miriam for a birthday present. This thought was in his mind as he walked down town the next afternoon. The year before he had given her a copy of Whittier's poems. Though it seemed hardly the right thing to present his wife with another book, he seemed unable to decide on anything else. The matter perplexed him. In this state of mind he was walking to the express office to send off a package.

Now it so happened that the store next to the express office was one where sewing-machines were sold; and as David was passing this, he

suddenly stopped, stood a moment, then entered the store.

"Good-afternoon," said the proprietor, advancing to meet him.

"You keep sewing-machines?"

"Yes, though we sell more than we keep," laughed the proprietor.

"That's what I meant, of course," said David, laughing. The two men seemed to understand each other at once.

After a few minutes, David remarked, "Forty-five dollars? Isn't that rather high?"

"Not for that machine," replied the proprietor, taking his bearings skilfully. "But of course we have other machines, made by another firm, practically as good for less money."

"How much less?"

"Twenty dollars less," replied the proprietor. "That machine there," indicating with his hand, "can be sold by us for twenty-five dollars: we warrant it in every respect. We have forty-five dollar machines for those persons who think an article is not worth having unless we charge them a good round price. But the twenty-five dollar machine is as well made and will give equally good service."

David stood knitting his brow. "You said twenty-five dollars?"

"Yes," replied the dealer.

David wanted to buy the machine but he didn't have the money with him and he knew he would

not have it until the beginning of the next month, nearly three weeks off ; and even the twenty-five dollars would make a big hole in his month's salary. The storekeeper read something of all this in his customer's face.

"That machine is cheap at twenty-five dollars, cash," said he, emphasizing the word cash. "But whenever it is desired, we sell it for the same price on what is called the monthly payment plan—five dollars down and five a month till paid for. In this way," continued the dealer, "a family can have the use of the machine while saving up the money to pay for it. With most young people just beginning to keep house there are so many things to buy all at once that this plan of paying so much a month is frequently adopted."

"You said five dollars down, and then five a month?"

"Yes."

"That would make five months before the last payment," said David more to himself than to the dealer.

"Yes, and your wife would have the use of the machine all that time."

"I—it hadn't occurred to me to buy a sewing-machine till last evening," said David, laying a bill in the hand of the dealer. "So I'm not prepared to-day to pay for it in full. You send up the machine this afternoon, and I'll drop in and see you on the first of each month till the account is balanced. Will that be satisfactory?"

"Perfectly," replied the dealer.

That evening at the supper table Miriam said, "It was so good of you, dear, to get it—especially when you need so many books for your study. But I don't see how I could do without a sewing-machine much longer—sewing by hand is so tedious."

The next evening they had together David enjoyed the satisfaction of watching Miriam's face as he listened to her well-modulated voice, while she read further into the story of "Janice Meredith."

The week had not passed before there was a change in the weather. The delightful days of October had given place to the beginnings of November, with clouds heavy and lowering, jealous of letting too much sunshine through.

"My! but it's cold up in the study," said David rubbing his hands over the kitchen fire. He had come down early to dinner, without being called, a thing very unusual for him who prized each one of the morning hours.

"Cold? So it must be," said Miriam, busy putting the finishing touches to the dinner. "I fear, David, this roast is not as good as what we've been getting. It's so tough!"

"Tough? Why I told the man two weeks ago if he sent us any more tough pieces we'd deal elsewhere."

"I know. And, dear, the meat has been very good since then till to-day. This piece is simply

awful—as tough as sole leather. I know we won't be able to eat it."

"I'll have to blow him up again," said David. "Perhaps he needs it every week or two."

Though the dining-room was immediately off from the kitchen it was too cool even there for comfort.

"Hadn't you better start the furnace this afternoon, dear? This sudden change in the weather may continue for several days, and it's hardly safe to depend longer on our little wood stove in the sitting-room."

"That reminds me! I haven't ordered any furnace coal yet. I must do so at once."

As Mr. Brand dealt in wood and coal, David went to his office to order a ton of furnace coal sent over to the house at once.

"You're living in Professor Wilson's house? For the past three years we've furnished Professor Wilson with coal, and it takes nine tons to run his furnace through an ordinary season. One year he had to order a ton extra. But that was a very severe winter, two years ago. It will save you considerable annoyance to say nothing about the dirt if we put in all you want at one time."

"I'm sorry, but ——" began David.

"And so far as paying for it is concerned," continued the clerk, with whom he was talking, "you can suit your own convenience about that. Many of our customers pay so much a month—till the whole amount is balanced."

"Very well," said David. "If you prefer to do so, put in the nine tons to-morrow and I will drop in and see you once a month. Here's pay for one ton." David handed the clerk a five dollar bill on top of which were three silver dollars.

"Costs something to run a furnace here in Minnesota," he observed as the clerk was making out his receipt.

"Yes, coal is rather expensive, though the dealers are handling it at a pretty close margin. It's the railroads that make the money. Freight rates from Chicago here are very high."

"Oh, I almost forgot. We shall need some more coal for the kitchen stove before long. How much will I need for the season?"

"Perhaps two tons more. Shall we add two tons of chestnut coal to your order?"

"Yes," said David, turning to go. "Though we do not need it just yet, it might as well be put in with the other. By the way, is Mr. Brand here?"

"Yes. Do you wish to see him?"

"If I may."

The clerk withdrew through a door marked "private."

"Step this way, Mr. Baldwin," said he, reappearing after a moment.

Mr. Brand met his young pastor very cordially, pressing him to sit down for a few minutes' chat. As his caller rose to leave a few minutes later, Mr. Brand said,—

"My wife and I will be glad to have you and Mrs. Baldwin take dinner with us next Monday evening."

"Thank you. I'm sure Mrs. Baldwin has no engagement for Monday evening, and we shall be glad to come."

"If anything should come up, feel perfectly free to let us know," said Mr. Brand, following David to the door. "A pastor's time, as I know very well, is not always at his own disposal."

David, on leaving Mr. Brand's office, spent the remainder of the afternoon making calls, the first of which was on a family living some two miles out in a little suburb called Glen Park. The father and mother were old people, too old to get out to church, both bowed down with the effects of many years of hard work. The other member of the home was a son, himself a man almost past middle life, an invalid, having suffered for many years from articular rheumatism. As David sat and talked with these three old people, for the son seemed as aged as either of his parents, it was easy to speak of the deepest things of human experience; the atmosphere of the home invited it; and as the conversation continued, David felt that he was in the presence of those who could teach him many things—the unobtrusive sanctity of that home was so real and genuine, the hard experiences of life had developed and ripened so many of the rarer qualities of spirit. Religion of the highest type was here embodied, for they had learned to live

their lives in the consciousness of the divine Presence. Before leaving, David knelt with the family in prayer—it seemed the only natural way of closing his call.

“Pastor, we’ve enjoyed your call so much. Wife and I can’t get out to church as we once could ; but our hearts are there.”

“I know you must be very busy,” said the wife. “But come and see us as often as you can. William, poor boy, is so glad whenever any one calls.”

David’s heart was full as he walked out to the car ; a great uplift had come into his soul, something like that which comes when one has been listening to certain kinds of music. His two other calls that afternoon were quite different ; the conversation was stilted, without purpose, on any casual topic, flitting from one subject to another. Yet as the young pastor walked away from each of these it seemed to him that he had done the best he could. But how poor that best seemed !

It was not long after this that David began to feel the need of increasing his library.

“Yes,” said he to Miriam at supper, “I must have some more books. Thus far I have been able to prepare only one sermon a week.”

“But you have preached twice every Sunday.”

“In the evenings,” he continued in reply, “I have used sermons which I had on hand—have worked them over a little and they have answered pretty well. I have only a very few more in reserve—three or four which amount to anything.

When these are gone it will be necessary to prepare two new ones each week, and I don't see how I can do it without increasing my working library."

"Of course you must get more books, David."

"I see no way out of it," said he ; " though I dislike to go in debt for them."

"Wouldn't the Publication Society send you what you find are really necessary, and let you pay for them by remitting so much a month? This wouldn't be exactly going in debt for them."

"Yes, I am sure they would."

"And you could be having the use of the books all the time you are paying for them."

That evening David made out a list of books he felt would be of greatest use to him. More than once he crossed off one title to give place to another which he felt he must have. The Publication Society wrote that they would be pleased to forward the selection and let him pay so much a month as he suggested. After much self-denial and many substitutions David succeeded in keeping his list down to forty odd dollars' worth. He wrote the society that he would meet this sum by sending five dollars on the first of each month.

"Books count up so," said he to Miriam. "I had to leave out of my list so many I ought to have: but I set the limit at fifty dollars."

"It won't be long before you can send in another order, dear. You can add the others then."

On the first of December the church treasurer

handed David an envelope containing his salary for the month just expired.

"Suppose I give this to you, Miriam; what would you do with it?" asked David, tossing the envelope into her lap.

"What would I do with it? Why, just what you are going to do with it, dear."

"But how do you know what I am going to do with a whole month's salary—eighty-three dollars and thirty-three cents? You must be a mind reader?"

"Perhaps I am," answered Miriam. "Suppose you write on this piece of paper what I dictate, and then you can tell whether I am or not."

"Very well," said David. "Though I'm more than half inclined to believe you are a mind reader without the formality of a test."

Miriam shutting her eyes dictated a few lines which read as follows:

Living expenses	-	-	-	\$20.00
Rent	-	-	-	16.66
Monthly payment on furniture	-			20.00
"	"	"	sewing-machine	5.00
"	"	"	coal - -	8.00
"	"	"	books -	5.00
"	"	"	encyclopædia—	

"Encyclopædia?" exclaimed David, astonished, "I haven't ordered any encyclopædia."

"But you know you wanted one so badly. I couldn't bear to think of you not having it."

"And you've ordered it?"

"Yes, David, dearest, I ordered it. I knew you needed an encyclopædia worse than I needed my sewing-machine. And I couldn't bear to use the machine so long as you were without necessary books for your work."

"But, Miriam, I ——"

"I wanted to get it as a Christmas present for you. You remember you told me you were going to get it as soon as we could afford it. Just after you sent off that order to the Publication Society bookstore, an agent called. You were out. So, dear, I ordered it as your Christmas present, though it will be shipped before that time."

"Perhaps it will be better if you leave such things to me after this." David was displeased and couldn't help showing it. "Of course, I suppose I did say something about intending to get the encyclopædia some time. But I can get along very well without it—there are any number of books I need worse just now ; and, besides,—oh, well, I suppose there's no use saying any more about it."

Miriam sat speechless. David, picking up a newspaper, buried himself behind its open double-page. Neither spoke. Miriam's under lip began to quiver; she opened her mouth as if to speak, yet did not speak, as if afraid to trust her voice. With set face David sat reading the newspaper—it mattered not that it was day before yesterday's paper. It absorbed him. He did not see his wife get up, hesitate an instant as if wavering between

a desire to be alone, and a longing to throw her arms about her husband's neck ; he did not look up till she was nearly through the door, but it was soon enough to catch a side view of her face. The tears were streaming down her cheeks.

Though the sight of Miriam's tears scalded David to the heart, he did not speak ; and Miriam passed on to her room. Left alone David began pacing the room, his mind confused, perplexed ; yet he was sure he had not done anything uncalled for. What had happened, anyway ? Could it be that he was to blame ? He did not think so, yet a suspicion haunted him. He had not meant to speak unkindly. He tried to recall what he had said. What was it that had hurt her so ?

One of the most delicate problems of life had arisen in this newly established home—the problem of mutual adjustment between husband and wife. Their love for each other was beyond question, yet almost without an instant's warning this storm had arisen, a thunder-bolt from a clear sky ; so delicately poised are the affections between man and woman, so easily disturbed by look or word, so uncertain are the moods and caprices of our human nature ! The art of living is sometimes called the finest of the arts. But is not the finest of the arts that of living together ?

David was beginning to feel thoroughly uncomfortable, pacing up and down that little sitting-room. The ice in his heart had all melted, leaving opportunity for the warmth of his true affec-

tions to do its work. A few more turns about the room, a few more futile attempts to keep down the rising pressure, and David was back to his better self. He went to Miriam's room where he found her lying on her bed, sobbing as if her heart would break.

Kneeling by her side he put his arms about her neck and drew her head to his shoulder.

"Will you forgive me, Miriam, dearest? I am sorry that I spoke to you as I did. I do not know why such harsh words ——"

"Don't say that, David! I was to blame. I should have told you. It was wrong of me to give the order without consulting you; it was wrong to spend so much money. But the agent said we could pay for the set by sending him five dollars a month; and, dear, I did so want you to have the books. But perhaps he'll take them back if I ——"

"Indeed, sweetheart, we'll not think of such a thing! I wouldn't have you cancel the order for anything. The encyclopædia is just what I want."

"But the other books—the ones you need more ——"

"Miriam, dearest, there are no books I need more. Forgive me for saying the cruel word. Let's rub it out. I didn't mean it, though I thought I did at the time."

"Are you very sure, David?"

"Very sure, sweetheart—absolutely certain."

Miriam's tears had ceased flowing, but her sobs

kept surging up one after another in spite of her efforts to keep them down. David kissed her assuringly on the cheek.

"The 'old man' gets the better of me once in a while, sweetheart. But come, let us get back where we left off."

With his arm about her they returned to the sitting-room.

"You were giving me a sample of your power at mind reading, sweetheart, when that—that—storm came up."

"Yes. The last item was the monthly payment on the encyclopædia."

"Which makes," said David, casting his eye over the column of figures, "seventy-nine dollars and sixty-six cents. I must confess, sweetheart, that so far your mind reading ability is beyond question. Can you give me still further proofs of it?"

"Yes. Next month and the month after and the one after that you will spend this much money in exactly the same way."

"Correct again," laughed David. "You are accurate enough to be a professional. But what am I going to do with all the rest of each month's salary—the three dollars and sixty-seven cents which we may, so to speak, call our own?"

"For one thing, David, you must get yourself a pair of shoes. You are needing them badly. That will take——"

"Three dollars and fifty cents," admitted David

as he glanced down at the crack in the side of the shoe on his left foot. "My right shoe seems very good yet: I don't need to buy two shoes—one will do," he laughed. "I'll buy a left one this month and perhaps we will be able to get the right one next month. Seems to me you must be needing something by this time also, sweetheart?"

"No," she hastened to answer, drawing her feet under her dress as she did so, "my *best* shoes are almost as good as new."

XI

ABOUT eight o'clock one Saturday evening the door-bell rang furiously and long, and, before Miriam could answer, the ring was followed by a vigorous knocking, the one desiring admittance not having heard the bell ringing far away in the kitchen.

"Is he in—the parson? I was told he lived here."

"Yes, Mr. Baldwin is in," replied Miriam. "You wish to see him? Will you please step into the sitting-room? I will call him."

"In jest a minit," said the young man turning to a horse and cutter which Miriam now observed in front of the house. She heard him say :

"This is the place, Mandy, and the parson's in."

The young man tied and blanketed his horse, and helped a young woman out of the cutter. She said something to him in an undertone, and he, reaching down under the seat, brought along with them into the house something tied up in a bag.

"I'd clean furgot about it, Mandy," said he. "Shows how much a feller needs a body to look after 'im."

The girl smiled gratefully as he looked fondly into her face, lit up from the light on the porch.

"We had an awful time a findin' where the parson lived," said he, as Miriam conducted the two into her comfortable sitting-room. "Mandy, p'raps you'd better set up to the stove—I'll be gol—but there ain't any stove in th' room."

Meanwhile Miriam had taken the girl in hand.

"You've been riding? Just loosen your wraps and sit here by the register. I'll put on a little more draft"—pulling the chain up a notch or two. "It must be very cold riding this evening?"

"Yes," answered the girl, taking the proffered seat. "It was quite cold, but I didn't mind it one bit."

"You bet 'twas cold!" exclaimed the young man, rubbing his hands over the heat from the register. "One of them things is 'most as good es a stove, ain't they, Mandy?"—indicating the register. "I know how they work," he continued, addressing himself to his sweetheart. "They have a big stove down in th' celler, an' on this is a big tank. They fill this tank with a lot of air—jest jam it in—they heat this air real hot—an' then they have pipes a leadin' this air thet's het to th' different rooms. It's quite a scheme, ain't it? Pretty dum nigh es good es havin' a stove. Mebby we'll have one some day, Mandy."

"I guess I'd ruther have a stove," answered the girl, pleased with the display of knowledge her lover had given before the wife of the minister. She knew that her present choice of a stove would elevate her in her lover's esteem.

David's study door opened and closed and he was heard coming down the steps.

"Good-evening," said he, entering the sitting-room and shaking hands with the two callers. "You have driven in from out of town?"—glancing at their heavy wraps.

"Yes; from Carr's Corners—thet's nine mile from here—a good nine mile."

"All of that, I should say," said David. "You remember, dear,"—turning to Miriam—"we rode out there on our wheels not long ago."

"Very good farmin' land out thet way," said the young man. "Some of it's a little rough yet—we're jest agettin' it in shape. Produces big crops—none better in the state."

For ten minutes or more David had to sit and talk "crops" to this caller who persisted in sticking to that subject, even though David tried once or twice to get him away from it. The girl was silent, though at first she had talked a little to Miriam. Catching her lover's eye, she gave him a sign as if to say, "Why don't you tell the minister what you want and let's be done with it?"

Plainly the young fellow was honestly attempting to do that very thing—to let the minister know what they had come to him for. But, somehow, no good place came, as it seemed to him, to introduce the subject uppermost in his mind. So he struggled on bravely for another ten minutes, talking animatedly on the qualities of various kinds of stock, which varieties were better for but-

ter and which for beef; then the conversation turned to the topic of farm implements and machinery.

David was beginning to get restless. He had planned to give the evening to putting the finishing touches on his morning sermon for the morrow, as his time had been broken into by a funeral on Thursday of the week. Again he tried to lead the young man to declare the object of his visit, by asking him some questions concerning his home. This led to a graphic, if disjointed, account of his caller's family history. David began to feel, however, that he had touched the right chord. He was amused if a little impatient; the young man was now approaching the point. His father had died some time ago; they had had their struggles to keep the mortgage from being foreclosed. But they had done it. Lately, during the year, his mother had died and he had been getting along as best he could with a younger sister as housekeeper.

"But a man needs a wife, specially when he's got cows to look after," said he, glancing at the girl, who seemed greatly relieved that her suspense was now so near at an end. "Things have been runnin' behind ever sence mother died—I mean in the house. Not that my little sister hain't done th' best she knowed how. She hes. But she's young—too young to look after cows. And es me and Mandy had been keepin' company together now goin' on nigh two years an' ——"

"It will be two years come Easter," interrupted the girl.

"Two years come Easter," he continued. "Well, only this week we d'cided to git married. And so we've druv in to see if you'll do the job and how much it'll cost us? I've heard of fellers payin' es much es five dollars. I couldn't go thet steep. But I thought es both o' our families, mine and Mandy's, had allers leaned toward your church, you'd do it fur us es cheap es anybody, an' p'r'aps a little cheaper, seeing how thet we'd allus had a leanin' in your d'rection."

He looked at Mandy, who nodded her head in support of her lover's statements as to their religious "leanin'."

"I can't pay no five dollars; but I thought p'r'aps you might do the job for us, say, fur a dollar?" The young man raised his eyes to the minister's face.

"It's not customary for a clergyman to make any definite charge for performing the marriage ceremony," answered David, succeeding with some effort in keeping down his amusement. "We take whatever fee the groom sees fit to give."

"Then you'll do it fur a dollar?" asked the prospective groom. The moment was filled with anxiety, as David hesitated. "You see we jest d'cided this week to have it done so soon, an' ——"

A look from Miriam brought David to a de-

cision. "Yes, if that is what you wish to give, I will perform the ceremony. You have your license, of course?"

"Yes," handing David a long envelope badly crumpled which he took from his overcoat pocket. David examined the license.

"Very well," said he; "I'll get my book."

In a moment David returned from his study, having his pastor's manual opened at one of the shorter forms of the marriage service. The lovers were holding a whispered consultation, and David considerately occupied himself at the other end of the room. From snatches of the conversation which reached his unwilling ears, it seemed that the girl was urging the young man to make some disclosure before the ceremony. This he seemed unwilling to do. She, however, insisted and finally gained her point.

"Mandy thinks," began the young man with evident reluctance, "thet I should tell you b'fore the job's done thet we ain't got no dollar with us—seein' there wa'n't nothin' much to take to market jest now to get no money with. But we thought mebby you wouldent mind takin' your pay in something we could bring along. So we've brung along some beeswax. I told her thet beeswax was jest exactly es good es cash and thet you could sell it at any of the stores, seein' we didn't get to town time enough. You don't mind takin' your pay in beeswax, do you? I told Mandy you wouldent mind—I knowed you

wouldent; but she says I must tell you *before* the marryin's done and not wait till afterward, es I wanted to, knowin' you wouldent mind."

David, again amused at this unexpected turn of affairs, waited patiently for the young man to conclude his speech which seemed difficult to draw to a close. The girl sat looking apprehensively from the face of her lover to that of the minister, anxious, yet confident she had insisted on what was right. Just inside the doorway, where the young man had left it on entering the room, was a bag containing, doubtless, the proposed fee.

"Under the circumstances," began David, "I won't mind taking as my fee a dollar's worth of beeswax, though it was well to mention this fact before the ceremony was performed. It puts the matter on a different basis."

"Thet's what I told John," said the girl, pleased that the minister had taken her view of the matter. "Tell him the rest of it, John."

John hesitated.

"But, Mandy, there ain't no use till after ——

"John, tell th' parson th' rest *now* or there won't be any *after*."

"Well, Parson," began the reluctant John, "what Mandy wants me to tell you is jest this—by actual weight th' beeswax we've got in thet there bag ain't wuth quite a dollar. But it's *A Number One*—every pound of it! At market price it 'ud fetch jest about seventy-five cents.

But it's all thet me an' Mandy could scrape up 'tween us, seein' thet we had nothin' else to turn off jest now. Would you mind doin' the job an' waitin' on us till spring, say, for th' rest of your pay?"

This further explanation of the prospective groom aroused in David the suspicion that the young man had over-persuaded the girl to consent to this hastily arranged marriage, and that very probably she would be glad to have the marriage postponed till John could get his financial condition in better shape.

"It is my opinion," said he, ignoring the young man's question and addressing both of them, "it is my opinion that you two had better wait a while before getting married. Would it not be better to get a little money ahead before taking this important step? Suppose you wait until spring. Come to me then."

The minister's well-meaning advice was interrupted by the young woman herself. Touching John on the arm, she whispered some words not intended for the minister's ear.

"Say, John, ask him if—if he couldn't marry us *now* as far as—as, as far as the beeswax goes?"

With no little effort David with outward gravity faced the new situation.

"But if *both* of you really wish to be married now," said he, before the young man had time to speak, "I will perform the ceremony at once. As for the fee—take the beeswax home with you,

and some time next spring when it is perfectly convenient you may bring us a jar of butter or some fresh eggs—as many or as few as you wish, and it will be all right.”

Within five minutes David was reascending the stairs, two steps at a time. But as he sat down to work on his sermon, the flow of his thoughts was more than once interrupted by the remembrance of the phrase “marry us now as far as the beeswax goes.”

He laughed aloud.

“Did she think that the marriage ceremony could be performed on the instalment plan, I wonder?”

XII

THE days of each week slipped by all too rapidly for the comfort of the young pastor; for each Sunday brought with it the necessity of having two sermons in shape. By the time his first year at Tioga was half over, David was beginning to be sorely perplexed for sermon material; he had preached, as it seemed to him, on almost every conceivable phase of the Christian life and experience; and he was filled with an awful dread lest he should be found repeating himself.

On Sunday evenings he and Miriam had their lunch after the service, and for an hour or more they would sit at the table visiting, like—like the lovers they were.

"I wonder what in the world I can get to preach about next Sunday?" he sometimes would say. "I haven't a single idea left."

"But you said the same thing last Sunday evening, dear; and see what excellent sermons you had worked out by the end of the week."

"Well, perhaps my morning sermon wasn't so bad; but this evening I had to go pretty much on my muscle, as we boys used to say in college."

"But I didn't notice anything out of the way this evening, dear; it was all right. And this morning several of the ladies, Mrs. James, Mrs.

Wood, Mrs. Terry and perhaps some others, yes and Mrs. Strong, of course, all had something nice to say of the sermon as I met them after the service."

"That's only because you are the minister's wife."

"I am sure these ladies are sincere, David. They wouldn't say they enjoyed the sermon, if they didn't mean it. You don't believe that Mrs. James would commend anything unless she really thought it was good?"

"Well, no; I hardly think Mrs. James would," admitted David reluctantly. "Isn't she a fine woman! I hope, Miriam, when you get to be her age, about forty years from now, you'll be just like her."

"Indeed, nothing would please me more. To be in her presence is such an inspiration—just to be near her makes one feel that goodness is worth while."

"And I can always preach better when she is at church. You know she was away a few weeks visiting her daughter in Chicago. I felt the difference. What sermons a man could preach if he had a house full of such listeners as Mrs. James!"

"Deacon Long—isn't he a good listener?"

"My dear, don't mention Deacon Long in the same breath with Mrs. James. They're as unlike as lead and gold." David had folded his napkin and was pushing back from the table.

"I know, dear, they are very unlike. Yet the deacon must be a very good man."

"What makes you think so?"

"He seems to prize your sermons very highly. Nearly every Sunday while you are preaching I see him taking notes, writing your best thoughts down in a little book."

"Is that so? I hadn't noticed it. Perhaps the deacon is more interested than I have been giving him credit for being. Somehow I'd got the impression he didn't care very much for my sermons. You know he is very conservative."

"But he listens so attentively, and though sometimes his eyes are shut, I know he is listening just the same. For when you've said something especially helpful, even when he seemed to be asleep, out comes his note-book and pencil and he writes the sentence down. Isn't it fine that so old a man, even if he is conservative, can appreciate the newer ideas?"

"Perhaps the deacon doesn't always recognize the new theology when he hears it. At any rate I am glad he is interested. It may be I'll have to revise my opinion of him yet."

"Does he never say anything to you about your sermons, dear? I should think he would—he's the only one in the audience that takes notes on them—except, of course, the reporter, Mr. Waller, when he is there."

"Well, no; nothing in particular. Yes, once he did say something, and at the time I thought it gave me a clue to his attitude toward me."

"What did he say?"

"It's scarcely worth repeating, but he asked me one Sunday whether or not I believed in the divinity of Christ. His question was very abrupt; and when I assured him that I did so believe, he seemed, I fancied, disappointed.

" 'I got the impression,' said he, 'from something you said last Sunday morning, that you didn't accept the virgin birth of our Saviour.'

" 'Perhaps we may look at this subject from different angles of vision, deacon,' I replied, not wishing to enter into a discussion with the old gentleman; 'yet rest assured,' said I, 'no one accepts the divinity of Christ more heartily than I do.'

" 'But if he wasn't conceived of the Holy Ghost, how can he be divine?' the deacon persisted. Fortunately some other people came toward the door just then and without appearing to do so I got away from him. I have a suspicion, Miriam, that Deacon Long is not altogether easy in his own mind as to my orthodoxy."

"Has he said anything further to you on the subject?" asked Miriam.

"No. Though I shouldn't wonder if he has come to know what my position is."

"How is that, if you didn't tell him?"

"It was this way. Mr. Brand, you know, has put himself out of the way to be nice to us."

"Yes; he has invited us to his home, time after time, yet I never feel altogether comfortable in his presence."

"But he was doing so much to make it pleasant

for us, and as he had been a pastor himself years ago before his health failed, I suppose it was only natural for me to be a little more confidential with him than I would have been otherwise ; but if I had it to do over again, I wouldn't take Mr. Brand into my confidence on any subject. I have felt since that he was just leading me on."

"Why, David, I never mistrusted that Mr. Brand would do such a thing as that ! May it not be possible that you are misjudging him ?"

"Indeed, I wish it were so. But I am morally certain that I am not misjudging him. The last time we were up there, was the week after Deacon Long had questioned me on the divinity of Christ. Well, somehow,—I do not remember just what did bring the subject up—Mr. Brand and I got to talking on the same topic—the divinity of Christ ; on the attitude of modern scholarship toward the virgin birth narratives, and what views the various Chicago professors in the Divinity school held ; and during our conversation which by no means was a one-sided one, I felt he was quite in sympathy with the modern position. At least his remarks created that impression in my mind ; and in reverting to Deacon Long's attempt to catechise me, I frankly stated my own conviction that in accepting the divinity of Christ it did not seem at all necessary to adopt the early church's attempt to explain it. I told him that I preferred to look upon the virgin birth accounts as attempts on the part of the early biographers of Christ to put a

physical basis or explanation under a life which they recognized as divine and felt the need of explaining; but that it seemed best to me not to attempt to explain the divinity of Christ by any such physical circumstance or condition as that alluded to in the virgin birth accounts, but to leave the whole matter unexplained, to accept Christ as the master of our lives and joyfully live in the inspiration of his presence, believing in him for what he was and is—the incarnation of God's highest and holiest message to the human race."

David was greatly animated in giving Miriam this account of his conversation with Mr. Brand; the subjects of the new theology always stirred him.

"Of course you felt freer to discuss these subjects with him than you would with many others in the church," observed Miriam, as she began to gather up the dishes and set the things away. "It's so hard not to be confidential, especially when people are so kind as the Brands have been."

"Yes; but in view of what has since happened, I see that Mr. Brand was just leading me on; that he is not at all in sympathy with modern thought."

"That was very, very mean of him! I had no idea he was such a man. I can scarcely believe it."

"Nor I. Yet I am coming to think he is a most perfect combination of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. In some respects he is goodness personified. In others,—well, I am being compelled to believe he

is capable of almost any underhanded trick or meanness to carry his purpose."

"Why, David! I am surprised to hear you speak in this way! They have been so good to us. You've never said a word of this to me before."

"No. I was waiting to be certain. Mrs. Wood—you know she is very much in sympathy with what I am trying to do—the other day she advised me to be very careful of what I said to Mr. Brand. She had been calling at the Longs', and the deacon had given her a full report of my conversation with Mr. Brand. She said though the deacon was simply horrified at my heresy, as he terms it, yet he was strangely elated over the fact of having made the discovery; for it seems that he and Brand have been working together to get me to commit myself on some of these subjects which I have studiously and religiously refrained from presenting from the pulpit."

"But you refrained from presenting them only because you thought the people—many of them—were not yet ready for these newer ideas, didn't you, dear?"

"Yes. While the University element of the congregation is eager for the newer thought and ready for it, that part of the audience not touched by the University or by the modern ideas in education and literature, had to be prepared, little by little for many of the things I would like to say to them."

"That's only natural. Christ found the same necessity; and so does every teacher of new ideas in religion. We must be content to go slowly, dear; and yet one can remain true to the message that burns within his own heart, even though he may think it best to keep some things in reserve for a while, as you are trying to do, dear."

"But being true to his message led Christ to the cross. It was just such people as Brand and Long who brought him there—people who regarded it a crime for another to have ideas of God different from their own. I am afraid these two men will cause me trouble yet. Mr. Brand has great influence in the church."

"But, dear, think of the number of families who are so much in sympathy with the newer thought, and the increasing number of students coming to hear you. I wouldn't mind what these two men do think, though of course it is annoying."

"They are watching me, that's certain. Of course, I shall continue to be moderate—as moderate as possible—in my pulpit utterances. But any one can see that all of my sermons are based on and grow out of the newer point of view."

"That's what makes them so helpful, dear; they are so vital and make religion such a real part of life. I couldn't bear to listen to you if you preached such sermons as Mr. Brand evidently would like to hear. But I must go now, dear. It's getting late." She kissed him on the forehead as

she was leaving the room. "Don't stay up too long burying your sermons under that story. Good-night, dear."

"Good-night, sweetheart ; pleasant dreams."

David adjusts himself to his easy chair, throwing one leg carelessly over an arm of the chair, and leans back so that a good light falls on the page. The book is one he has drawn from the city library, a very interesting story the librarian had said, when he inquired for something to read Sunday evening after church. The librarian had come to know about what the pastor of the First Church wanted ; for just before retiring on Sunday evening, David always read the most interesting book he could get, until he became thoroughly interested in the story and was loath to give it up. Then he would go to bed and soon be fast asleep. If he did not lose himself thus, in some story before retiring, his sermons of the day would be going through his mind all night, either keeping him awake or disturbing his rest.

David hears the clock on the mantel strike twelve ; he will read only fifteen minutes more ; the half hour strikes and David starts—he will go to bed in just a minute or two—just as soon as he finishes that chapter. At the end of the chapter the situation is almost too interesting to leave—just one more chapter, is his resolve.

With interest at the keenest point, David closes the book and steals softly to bed. The clock strikes one, but he does not hear it. Blessed,

blessed sleep—God's choicest gift to weary brain and tired body! Sleep well and long.

Blessed, blessed gift of imagination! For through its gracious service this tired preacher had, so to speak, taken his jaded mind out walking amidst scenes delightful and refreshing, changing his thought, inviting relaxation, enabling him to dismiss everything which tended to frighten that shy and capricious visitor, the angel of repose.

XIII

“LET me see—when is the time for our annual collection for foreign missions? It’s a week from Sunday, isn’t it?”

“Yes, a week from next Sunday.”

“So far as I can see, it will be just impossible for us to give anything this year. I am sorry, but I don’t see how we can do otherwise. This living on the instalment plan, having so many things to meet each month, cuts us down to the last notch.”

“But, David, we’re having the use of the things and we couldn’t very well do without any of them. Of course the sewing-machine is all paid for. That’s one thing less to think about.”

“But its place was soon taken by that suit of clothes I had to order. I wonder if we’ll ever get out of the woods, having commenced this way?”

“Why, yes, dear. It won’t be long before several of the things will be paid for.”

“But for every one we pay off it seems we have two other things we ought to get.”

It was Monday and David was blue. Blueness, however, was not always an accompaniment to David’s Mondays, only to one now and then, whose color became occasionally so intense as to make up for the Mondays that were not blue. On these days Miriam had learned to discount many

things her husband said by about fifty per cent. She was learning also how she could best break the power of these spells : that one of the surest antidotes was to take tea with the Stewart family where the abounding life currents were so normal and so strong. David would soon catch something of their movement, be drawn out of his little eddy where the water was getting unwholesome, and before the time for their return home, he would be quite himself again. During these blue times, calls on some of the other church families had just the opposite effect, making his mood more severely intense. These families Miriam endeavored to shun during these trying days, as she would have endeavored to shun exposing David to some terrible disease ; but at the Strongs', the Stones', the James' and the Stewarts', especially at the Stewarts', it was always well to call when David had the blues. And a call there usually meant staying to supper. Nor did this inconvenience the Stewart household in the least—two more plates were laid, though more often only one, for there was usually one extra plate on their ample board. Not a single thing extra was cooked, and there was no flurrying, no fussing, no stewing, no apologies ; just a hearty welcome and always the same.

But before Miriam said anything of all this which was in her mind, David continued, anent their financial situation and the missionary collection.

"It will not be setting a very good example unless we contribute something," said he, dejectedly ; "yet for the life of me I don't see how we can do it. I shall not be able this month to pay for those things we had to get at the drug store."

"I have been thinking of this collection for some time, dear ; and I've succeeded in saving nearly a dollar toward it."

"Saving nearly a dollar? Miriam, what can you mean?" Astonishment was written all over David's face.

"Well," confessed Miriam, "for several weeks I've had this collection in mind, as I knew just how we are situated financially ; so I set out to save a little and I'll have a dollar by a week from Sunday."

"But how—how have you done it?" persisted David.

Miriam hesitated. "That's my secret ; perhaps I don't care to let you know all my secrets."

"Very well"—the little blue devils were accountable for the tone in which he said it—"very well."

"Of course, dear, if you really want to know ; but I've enjoyed keeping it so far very much. I know it's selfish and I should have shared it with you long ago. I have been ——"

"There are some books I must return to the city library this afternoon," interrupted David, ashamed of having spoken as he did. "Do you wish me to return yours?"

"No, dear; I'm not through with it yet. It's not due for another week."

"Perhaps I'll get back in time to make one or two calls. Are there any special places we should go?" he asked, as he gathered up his book.

"How would it do to take tea with the Stewarts'? We haven't been there for some time, —at least Mary wanted to know yesterday if we weren't ever going to come and see them any more."

"Why, we call there twice as much as we do anywhere else—seven times more than at some places."

In good season David returned from the library; and after making one other call, they set out, at David's own suggestion, for Auntie Stewart's, as he had come to designate that household.

Mary welcomed them heartily at the door.

"Just come right in. I'll call mother. So you did repent of your sins, and decide to call on us again?"

"Yes, we thought it was about time for you to have a call from the minister—some people, you know, need looking after oftener than others."

"So I've heard. And I know some people who are so bad they have to go to church twice a Sunday—it must be awful trying on one's constitution to have to go to church twice on Sundays, as preachers have to do."

Mary Stewart always had an answer ready for

David ; and these two found great fun in parrying the other's thrusts.

Such original ideas as this young lady had on so many theological topics ! "The Bible presents such funny conceptions of heaven," she once said to David. "Now I don't take any stock in golden streets and walls of jasper and harps and all such things."

"Indeed ?"

"No. The heaven that I believe in is far different."

"Different ?"

"Yes ; anybody can see that it was a man and not a woman who wrote that account in the Bible. If Mrs. St. John had had hold of the pen I fancy it would have been very different. Men have so little imagination on some subjects—especially heaven."

"What do you fancy Mrs. St. John might have written ?" asked David.

"Well, if she's had to get up all her life, and get the breakfast for a family as large as ours, I'm sure she'd have written something about heaven's being a place where everybody could just lie abed till breakfast was ready. Now I'm sure that'd be a very sensible thing to say about heaven, and much more consoling to us women than golden streets and jasper walls, especially if we happen to be the ones who've had to get the breakfasts every morning since we can remember."

"Listen to that, Mrs. Baldwin ! Mary's trying

to make a heretic of your husband!" exclaimed Cora, who had entered the sitting-room as her sister was talking.

Miriam and Mrs. Stewart always found much in common, and had some of the best of visits, the only hindrance being the attempts of three or four of the other members of the family who were trying to engage in conversation with Miriam at the same time, not with disrespect to their mother, however, but just edging in overflow remarks now and then. When the boys were all in after supper, the seven young people were well nigh irresistible, but Tom was the acknowledged leader in wit and repartee, while even the youngest member of the family, Elizabeth, was shyly learning to enter the lists with the rest.

With David and Miriam in their midst conversation simply ran wild, three or four centres going at full speed all at one time, reminding an observer of a three or four-ringed performance at a circus.

In the old gentleman, the sense of humor was highly developed, and few things pleased him more than to get off a joke on his wife.

"Do you believe in family prayer, Mr. Baldwin?" Mr. Stewart asked, having waited two or three minutes for a suitable opportunity for wedging his question in. "I would like to know if you as a minister advise newly married couples to have family prayer?"

"Now, Ephraim!" protested his wife. "I thought you'd forgotten all about that long ago."

"Forgotten? Why, Susan, I haven't forgotten it any more than you have."

The younger members of the family had heard the story before—some of them more than once; but attention spoke eloquently of their desire to enjoy it again. David mistrusted that something was coming.

"If I am to state my practice, as I have had only one marriage, I fear, Mr. Stewart, there wasn't anything said one way or the other on the subjects of prayers."

"Well," continued the old man almost shaking with suppressed laughter, "when Susan and I were married, the minister was very careful to enjoin upon us the solemn duty and great privilege of family worship. We were both duly impressed. It so happened that we did not go to keeping house for a few weeks; but when we did, the old minister's exhortation was fresh in our ears.

"It was the first evening in our little home. 'Susan,' said I, 'shall we not follow the good minister's advice and establish a family altar?'

"His words have ever been in my mind, Ephraim, and I am agreed to it," she replied.

"Don't you think it would be better for both of us to pray—each making a short prayer, than for just one of us to pray?' I asked knowing that Susan was very fluent in the prayer-meetings from which I used to see her home.

"Why, just as you like, Ephraim—just as you think best.'

“‘I always enjoy your prayers, Susan,’ said I.

“So it was agreed that after reading a few verses of Scripture, each of us should lead in prayer. Now, though I was a member of the church I had never been much of a hand at praying out loud, and at my father’s home we were not accustomed to having family worship. So it is not to be wondered at if I didn’t get in all the customary phrases. I just plunged ahead asking the Lord for what I wanted and thanking him for his many blessings.

“Well, somewhere in the prayer I wanted to say something about Susan. As nearly as I could remember afterward I said: ‘O Lord, help Susan to be a better woman.’ I don’t know just why I used those words; guess I simply wanted the Lord to bless her, that was all. I didn’t mean anything special by it, not in the least.

“But evidently Susan didn’t think so. The first part of her prayer was very eloquent, she seemed even more animated than usual. But all of a sudden her tone changed. ‘O Lord,’ said she, as if in offset to my petition for her, ‘O Lord, keep Ephraim from being such a fool.’”

Even Mrs. Stewart joined in the hearty laugh which greeted the end of her husband’s reminiscence.

“Since that time, Mr. Baldwin,” continued Mr. Stewart when he was able to make himself heard, “since that time Susan and I have each made our communications to the Lord privately.”

During the moments they were listening to their father, Mary and Tom and Cora and the rest, having each thought of some incident too good to keep, were eager to plunge into the midst of the competition for a listener. Four to five were talking at once, some at Miriam and some at David. Doubtless it is custom that has restricted us to being able to listen to only one speaker at a time; for Mrs. Stewart had no trouble in keeping in touch with the several conversations going on about her.

As the callers rose to go Mr. Stewart approached David.

"That was a grand sermon you gave us Sunday morning, Mr. Baldwin, a grand sermon. It gave me an entirely new conception of the book of Job. But why shouldn't a Hebrew write a drama as well as a Greek? Why shouldn't a Hebrew writer use his creative imagination the same as writers of all other nations have done? For one I am proud that the First Church of Tioga has a pastor who is in sympathy with these modern views of the Bible."

"Thank you, Mr. Stewart: I am glad if you found the sermon helpful."

"Indeed I did. The book of Job has never meant anything to me—it was all a jumble—what Bildad, Eliphaz and Zophar said being all on the same plane with what Job said. But now, when, as you pointed out, the writer puts what he does not believe in the mouths of the three friends, and

has Job get the best of them in the debate, I can see some meaning to it all. The old ideas of that day are shown to be inadequate. And those scenes before the debate begins—why I always was taught to look upon them as actual occurrences.”

“Of course. So was I.”

“I used to get into all sorts of difficulties when I thought about it,—when I read it as actual occurrences. But as the work of creative imagination, a setting or background for the rest of the drama, it gives one no trouble at all—I can understand it. But, Mr. Baldwin, all this requires a different view of the inspiration of the Scriptures from what we’ve been accustomed to.”

“Yes; that is the point at which all other questions converge—these new views do require us to reconstruct our beliefs concerning inspiration, concerning the way the Biblical literature came into existence.”

“I think I am coming to understand your position, Mr. Baldwin. To tell the truth,” lowering his voice to a confidential whisper, “for years I’ve been growing away from a number of the old traditional beliefs. A man who reads can’t well help it!”

“Father! Are you talking to Mr. Baldwin yet?” called Mary from the hall where she was assisting Miriam to put on her wraps. “Father does enjoy your husband so much,” she added to Miriam.

"I'm so glad we came. We always have such a very pleasant time," answered Miriam, as David at last joined her at the door.

"Come back again, soon," called Mrs. Stewart, as the young pastor and his wife stepped out into the cool night air.

David's blues had vanished. His conversation had its old hopeful ring; he was his normal self again, and Miriam was glad. She was early becoming an adept in one of the finest of the arts—that of managing a husband without his knowing it; for David would surely have resented his wife's suggestion to take tea with the Stewarts', if he had known her purpose.

A few minutes' brisk walking brought them to their own door.

"I haven't shared my secret with you yet, dear," said Miriam as they stepped into the house.

"Forgive me, sweetheart; I was rude in asking about it in the first place. Don't tell me at all unless you wish."

"Oh, I'm happy to share it with you, though I did enjoy having it all to myself for a while."

"What a mysterious secret it must be!"

"Oh, it don't amount to much. Yet I've gotten a lot of pure enjoyment out of it. You'll laugh, I know you will, when I tell you what it is, what a silly little secret it is. But I won't care one bit if you do. David, dear, I've saved nearly a dollar by—by not eating any butter for some time."

"By not eating any butter! You did this to get some money for the missionary collection?"

"Yes, dear. There didn't seem to be any other way to get it; and I didn't mind doing it at all. Indeed, I've thoroughly enjoyed saving the money in this way."

"The idea! Who ever heard of such a thing! —the minister's wife going without butter in order to send a dollar to the heathen! Here I've been spreading my bread just as plentifully as ever, while you've been going without."

"I had such fun in keeping you in the dark! More than once I thought you had found me out; but you didn't. You were just as good and stupid about it as you could be."

"But now I'm going to pay you back with interest. You'll see that I'll get even with you," he laughed.

"Even with me?"

"Yes. I'm bound, you see, to make up for lost time. It wouldn't do at all for the minister to let any member of his congregation surpass him in self-denial! Until that collection is taken I shall eat neither butter nor—nor mutton chops nor ——"

"Why, David, we haven't had mutton chops since we commenced keeping house," protested Miriam.

"Well, you see, sweetheart, I must catch up with you. I must deny myself of more than you did, since you took advantage of me by getting

started first. I'll not stop by simply going without butter. What I've lost in time must be made up in quantity. Yes, I shall add mutton chops. Please don't prepare any mutton chops for me till this missionary collection is taken."

"Anything else?" asked Mirian laughing.

"I shall eat no butter, nor mutton chops, nor green corn on the cob, nor ——"

"Green corn on the cob, David, in April?"

"Certainly, my dear," David did not smile, "I shall deny myself of all green corn on the cob till after that collection. I shall add also to my list all pie—from now on you'll have to eat your pie alone, for I solemnly affirm I shall not touch a single piece."

"Nor have you tasted a piece of pie in this house since we came to live in it."

"Miriam, dear, any one can easily see that your statement has no bearing whatever on the subject under discussion. I repeat—it is my determination to deny myself of all kinds of pie, mince pie, apple pie, lemon pie, pumpkin pie, peach pie and pie by whatever name it may be known. Now please do not try to dissuade me, dear, from making this sacrifice. I am determined to do it. Nothing shall stop me. I must get even with you in some way. Tea and coffee shall also be denied; white bread, hot rolls, doughnuts, sausage, sauerkraut, lobsters, venison, fried potatoes, new peas and—and—well, I think that will do. Please remember the list and in preparing any of these

things, cook only what you may want for yourself. I shall religiously deny myself of them all."

"What an immense sum we'll have by a week from Sunday!" laughed Miriam.

When the treasurer was looking over the envelopes, transferring to his church account book the amounts each family had given, he paused a moment when he came to the pastor's envelope, wondering not so much at the smallness of the sum as why it had been made one dollar and twenty-three cents rather than a dollar and a quarter.

"Doubtless the pastor forgot to put in the other two cents," said he to his wife.

"But, Jacob, it reads \$1.23 on the outside of the envelope," said Mrs. Long. "And the '3' is made very plainly, too."

"That's so! I wonder what could be the reason?"

"Why, Jacob, it must be that they give a certain per cent. of his salary to foreign missions, and it figured out just that amount."

"I guess you're right, Josephine. I guess you're right," replied the deacon writing the figures down in his ledger. "I don't see how you can account for it in any other way." After carefully blotting the name and the figures, Deacon Long turned back and compared this amount with what the previous pastor had contributed for foreign missions the last year he was with them.

"Brother Baldwin don't seem to be nearly so

much interested in missions as our previous pastor was," he observed.

"It's no more than you can expect, Jacob, from the kind of sermons he's preaching."

"I've been waiting to hear him preach a sermon on missions, but he never has yet."

"Perhaps he don't believe that the heathen are all doomed to suffer in the bottomless pit. Can it be possible, Jacob, that our church has a pastor who believes that there is salvation out of Christ—that the heathen are not doomed to eternal punishment, unless snatched as brands from the fire?"

"Brother Brand and I are both waiting to hear what he'll say on this subject. Brand suggests that we have some of the ladies request him to preach a sermon or two on missions. I guess that'll work all right. We're quietly getting his beliefs on as many subjects as we can. I've got a number of his unsound statements already in my note-book, but Brand says we must keep still till we get considerable more."

"It's a pity Mr. Baldwin *is* so unorthodox! Otherwise he's a real nice man. Sister Hunter was telling me the other day how much she enjoys the pastor's calls. She says that no pastor we've had since she has been blind has been more attentive in calling on her. She said that Mr. Baldwin's conversations with her were so helpful and his prayers helped her so much. I can't understand, Jacob, how it is that a pastor who

holds such unorthodox beliefs as Mr. Baldwin surely does, can be so good a man?"

"But natural goodness, Josephine, don't count. Good works will never save any man. Neither Brand nor I have any fault to find with the pastor's goodness. It's his *beliefs* that are the important thing. We want a pastor to preach sound doctrine. What's the use of having a denomination unless we're going to have sound doctrine preached in it, I'd like to know? And Brand thinks just as I do about it."

"Of course, that's so. It's the doctrine that's the important thing."

"Certainly, Josephine."

The deacon and his wife worked on transcribing the accounts to the church ledger, finding a peculiar joy in what they were doing; for was not looking after the collection for the heathen a kind of church work especially pleasing to the Lord? They were sure it was, and their joy in it was in exact ratio to the strength of their assurance.

These two devout souls were unconsciously playing a pathetic, a tragic part in one of the great dramas of life, a drama which in varying degrees of intensity has continued to be reënacted since the earliest memory of the race. It reached its climax once with Socrates as the central actor; at other times and in other places it has come to a climax with such central figures as Isaiah, Paul, Savonarola. In a way most preëminent it reached

a climax with the Christ. This perpetually reacting drama is the action and reaction between the leaven of new ideas and the lump of human conservatism.

It is one and the same spirit which drank the hemlock, suffered on the rack, endured the fagots, or died on the cross. It is one and the same spirit which brewed the hemlock, constructed the rack, piled the fagots, erected the cross. Not that these things were done necessarily by bad men—far from it. In perhaps every instance they believed they were serving their day and generation to the best of their ability. Such is the tragedy, such is the pathos in the problem of the lump and the leaven!

XIV

IT was one of those perfect days in the latter part of August, made especially for people who wish to spend the time out of doors lying under the trees, drinking in that inspiration which comes from first hand contact with the chirp of birds, with the soft music of running water, with the lapping of the waves, with the varied sounds of insect activity, with the open sky peeping down through the trees ; a day neither too warm nor too cool, with a few clouds but without the first suggestion of rain. Such was the day—only better—on which came the first anniversary of David and Miriam's marriage.

With a basket packed full of lunch, leaving only room enough for a couple of magazines and a book to be tucked in at the side, these two married lovers mounted their wheels about ten-thirty in the forenoon and rode out of town, up past the university grounds, and soon came to the drive around the lake. This driveway was smooth and well kept. Now the cyclists came to a sharp turn and a bit of a hill which was easily ridden without dismounting ; they passed through a cluster of pine, and down a gentle slope along which the wheels sped like things endowed with life. Farther on the drive led for an eighth of a mile over the neck

of a marsh, with tall reeds and marsh hay on either side.

Emerging from the marsh, they ascended a gradual slope, and another half of a mile brought them to the foot of a hill too steep and too long to ride; dismounting, they walked to the top, which was some distance from the lake. A fringe of trees entirely shut the lake from view. Mounting their wheels again the cyclists coasted along a delightful declivity not too steep, yet with down grade sufficient to carry them swiftly along past the wild cherry trees and the old rail fence, gathering momentum which would carry them far up the approaching ascent.

The top of this ascent being gained, the drive turned abruptly to the right; they rode on a short distance, when, suddenly, the thin fringe of trees gave way and the lake lay before them.

"Isn't it grand!" Miriam exclaimed.

Two or three miles of water lay between them and the city on the other side, with its church spires and tall university buildings looming up in contrast to the less pretentious structures. Viewed across the water the scene was most beautiful.

"Yes," answered David, "the suddenness with which the view of the lake breaks upon one, must have something to do with it."

Slowly they rode along this open space, and after a few minutes came into another bit of woodland, the road winding this way and that, up hill and down, now wholly shaded by trees arching

from either side, now with the blue of the sky peeping down through the overhanging branches, until it passed over a rustic bridge, their proposed destination.

The approach to this rustic bridge is one of the most charming bits of scenery to be found in many a day's travel. It breaks upon you as a surprise when you come to it for the first time, and additional visits only add to your first impression. As you ride out of a stretch of quite dense woods the drive makes a graceful curve and brings you at once to an opening in the foliage, caused by a deep ravine, over which this rustic bridge several yards in length joins bank to bank. At the farther end of the bridge the driveway is immediately lost to view owing to a decided bend to the right, giving to the scene, in an unusual degree, the effect of completeness joined with mystery.

Dismounting on this bridge, David and Miriam, after enjoying the view for a few minutes, retraced their way to the side of the ravine they had just approached, and turned off into the trees. The shore of the lake was a few rods down the slope.

A little more than half way from the drive to the lake was the spot they were seeking. Here was shade or sunshine as one wished, with soft velvety carpet to lie upon ; to the left was the ravine with its low music of running water keeping time to the swish of the waves a little distance below. On all sides the woods were untouched, while through

the trees came glimpses of the lake and of the city beyond.

The hour before luncheon passed rapidly as Miriam read aloud the closing chapters of "The Reign of Law," by one of their favorite authors.

"I do not like the way it closes," said David. "It is a masterful treatment of a great problem; but to my mind the story in its closing is not true to the situation."

"You mean that the young man shouldn't have lost his religion?"

"Certainly. Our author seems to indicate that the natural transition, in the instance he has portrayed so well up to a certain point, is from a belief in a personal Deity to a belief in the reign of Law. I do not think his conclusion is true to the situation."

"Doubtless it is true in the experience of many a student—this transition indicated by the author."

"Yes, doubtless; and it might have been true in my case had it not been for one of my professors. This makes me all the more confident that the struggle ought not to close as the author ends it. I have half a mind to write a book and set forth the matter as I know it from experience."

"Why don't you?"

"Why don't I write a book?" David laughed merrily as he repeated the question. "Why—why, perhaps I may some day—who knows? There are enough things connected with my pastorate already to make an interesting book, if only

I could get them in shape. Think of being called to a church with the stipulation that I must come as a married man !”

“But, David, you wouldn’t put things that have actually happened in your book, would you?”

“Why not? I’ve read of many writers doing it. The best fiction doubtless has a basis of fact in it.”

“I wonder how an author prepares to write a work of fiction? Does he know all about the story before he begins, or does he work it out as he goes along?”

“Oh, I suppose some do one way and some another. In twenty-five years from now I may be able to tell you more about it.”

Both laughed.

“At the present moment, however,” continued David, “I prefer to discuss lunch;—my! it’s almost one o’clock.”

While they were eating, a little chipmunk came out of his hole near by, and after watching them a moment with a sort of nervous curiosity, disappeared and soon came to the surface again accompanied by its mate. The two of them, after making sundry observations, began to draw a little closer to the strangers, but at the least sudden move on their part, the little creatures would scamper back into their hole. On finding they were not pursued, they would soon reappear. David threw them some crumbs; for which the chipmunks seemed to say “Thank you” as they

packed these dainty morsels away in their capacious cheeks.

"I suppose these chipmunks have their own problems to meet and solve, just like human beings have theirs."

"Without doubt they do—in their own way," answered Miriam.

"I hope they are able to solve their problems better than some of us do ours," continued David. "You remember, Miriam, how confident I was just a year ago that we could save, during our first year, two hundred dollars to pay off that school debt? Well, here we are at the end of the year without a single cent ahead."

"But, dear, never mind that. We've done the very best we could. There's no hurry. We've had so many necessary things to buy this year. But I hope that during the coming year we may be able to reduce my school indebtedness some—say fifty or a hundred dollars."

"I hope we may, sweetheart; but if we carry out certain plans we have in mind, it will crowd us pretty close to save very much."

"You mean our plans concerning a baby?"

"Yes."

"But the necessary expense need not be very much, dear; and I do hope we shall not have to wait much longer. A home is incomplete without children."

"As to the expense, I suppose one can never tell what it will amount to."

"No, I had in mind the preparations. We need not get anything expensive. A very simple outfit would do. And as for the other expenses, I am so well and strong—I'm sure the expense wouldn't be so very much. Of course, it's best that we've waited this long; but now we're getting several of our things paid for, and—and, David, you can never know how my heart hungers for a little baby all our very own."

"But we must consider the matter very carefully, sweetheart. To my mind it is a crime to summon a young life into this world without planning for its needs. The little folks have nothing to say in the matter. I sometimes wish they had. How many children out of every hundred would respond if they had their say in deciding whether they would come? Think of the kind of welcome many of them get!"

"But don't you think, dear, that more people are coming every year to think and plan over these matters? Parenthood is the most sacred function of life. It seems to me almost incredible that any one could incur its responsibilities thoughtlessly."

"Yes, I think more people are giving to parenthood the serious thought it deserves; but at the same time there are any number of intelligent people who plan as to times and seasons and proper conditions for the propagation of horses and cattle and dogs, and yet give no thought to these things when their own kind is concerned."

"They have never been awakened to the importance of such planning," said Miriam. "Most people seem to take the coming of children as a matter wholly beyond their control. How my heart aches for women who have motherhood thrust upon them time after time without having any choice in the matter at all."

"Yes. And what a heritage such children come into. The mother's thought and state of mind have such an influence in forming the disposition and temperament of the child."

"As many a mother has learned when it was too late. This must be one of the saddest experiences of life."

"How?" asked David.

"Why, for a mother to realize that certain undesirable traits in the disposition of her child were due to her own state of mind when she held the young life near her heart. I know of one or two cases like that. What wouldn't a mother give to be able to undo what is then too late to change?"

"But why didn't some one tell them—their own mothers—before they had incurred parenthood? Here is something I cannot understand. Parents let their sons and daughters grow up in ignorance of many things they should know, and for the lack of such knowledge irreparable blunders and even crimes are committed, which would have been avoided if parents had done their duty by their children."

"I cannot understand it either," said Miriam, as

she finished packing away the remains of their lunch. "Parents seem to enter into a conspiracy to keep their children from knowing many things concerning their own bodies which they ought to know."

"Yes ; a false modesty or a desire to keep children from knowing too much of the mysteries of life, or an utter indifference is at the bottom of it all. I've been thinking, Miriam,—how would it do for me to give a series of Sunday evening talks on some of these topics—to give them in the place of the evening sermon?"

"That would be fine ! I hope you will do it, David."

"Well, I've had it in mind as a possibility for several weeks. There's need enough of some one undertaking it, and I have half a mind to try."

During the weeks following this conversation David could not get away from the conviction that he should give his proposed series of Sunday evening talks. Gathering a few books about him he set to work. The task was no easy one, but he brought to it a high and holy motive which sustained him more than once when he was about to give the whole matter up, owing to the difficulty he had in developing his subjects in a manner suitable for public presentation.

From September to January he gave odd moments to this work, all the time his conviction growing stronger that he was engaged in a work

that should be done. On the Sunday morning after New Year's, David announced from the pulpit his intention of beginning that evening a series of sermon-lectures on the general topic of "Getting Acquainted with Ourselves."

"For some time," he went on, "I have been impressed with the fact that on some of the most vital questions of life there is little or nothing said in the form of public instruction; and in private there is, I fear, only a very little more attention given to these same vital considerations.

"It is not surprising, therefore," he continued, as the auditorium grew breathlessly still, "it is not surprising, in view of the lack of information given to young people on some topics concerning which they ought not to remain in ignorance, that the period of youth is filled with needless anxieties and questionings and not infrequently with missteps which no amount of fervent repentance can retrace."

The silence of the church was oppressive as the pastor paused to take a deep breath before continuing. His face was kindled with a terrible earnestness.

"Only last week," said he, speaking in a low voice but which could be heard in all parts of the room, "I was talking with a young man, one of the students in the university, who told me with tears in his eyes that he would gladly give the next ten years of his life, if he could but go back to the age of twelve and live his life over again.

Till my talk with him, I was not absolutely certain that I could bring myself to deliver the addresses on which I had been studying for some time. But after that conversation I determined to wait no longer; for I am convinced that the case of the young man to whom I have alluded is no solitary instance: all about us are young men who, through lack of suitable instruction and guidance, have been led into a bondage whose tyranny is equaled only by its pernicious effects. Oh, for some one to guide the course of life as the mysterious powers of sex are awakening!

“Not only with boys is there the need of instruction and guidance as they pass into a consciousness of their larger selves; the need is equally imperative in the case of the other half of the human family. What anxieties, what mistakes, what missteps could have been avoided, if mothers had only shared with their daughters such knowledge as they possess!

“If children are not instructed chastely and lovingly as to the nature and use of the functions of sex, they will get a vulgar knowledge of these things from other children at school or on the street. And few things can be more pernicious to a child than a perverted idea of the meaning of sex. Ideas control action, and the safest way to keep a child from having a wrong idea or conception is to give him the conception you would like for him to hold. My friends, ignorance is a dangerous safeguard to virtue.

"As one called and set apart to guide and instruct and inspire to right ways of thinking and doing, I feel strongly moved toward doing whatever I may be able to arouse the members of this congregation to an adequate appreciation of the problems lying so near the heart of every home. Therefore," he concluded, "instead of the usual evening service which some of you feel called upon to support by your presence through, I doubt not, a sense of duty, we shall have a service in which I shall attempt to discuss some phase of the problem of sex. For around this problem cluster nearly all the other great and vital problems of life."

When David Baldwin entered his pulpit that evening he found a crowded house awaiting him, a circumstance very unusual, as Tioga was preeminently a place of morning audiences.

"In no language is there a word filled fuller of mystery than is the word *life*," began the preacher as every face turned toward his. "Life—we talk of it as if we knew what it was, what it is, yet we are unable to define it; perhaps we are as far away from an adequate definition of life to-day as were the ancients before us. Like electricity, we may know considerable about it, but the reality itself eludes our search.

"In plant, in animal, in man we recognize a difference when there is life and when life is gone; but just what that difference is we cannot tell.

Those who have given the subject prolonged attention and study, and who are thus qualified to speak with authority, tell us that wherever found, whether in animal or plant or man, life is essentially the same, differing in quality and quantity, yet retaining so much in common, we may say that all life is related ; that the life of the universe is essentially one thing—plants, animals and the human race being but different embodiments, different manifestations of this life.

“There are very good reasons,” continued the speaker, “reasons which I cannot go into now, as it would take me too far afield from my purpose, but which are open to any one wishing to investigate the subject—there are very good reasons for believing that life started on this planet in its lowest forms and that through the ages there has been a gradual ascent, bringing into existence the whole range of plant and animal families, and culminating in the form known as the human race. No more fascinating story exists than the broken record of the rise of life from lower to higher forms. In this ascent many of the steps are now lost to our view, but enough do exist to indicate more or less clearly the path along which the procession marched.

“Of all the many mysterious things connected with life, there is perhaps none more profoundly mysterious than its transmission ; whether it be in plants or animals or man, the passing on of life from one generation to the next, is wholly beyond

our comprehension. Like other vital processes, this also cannot be explained: it can only be described. And all life if left to its natural course tends to perpetuate itself.

“In some of the lower animal forms life is perpetuated by segmentation—the parent simply dividing itself into various segments or offspring. Some plants are endowed with the same property: those that can be propagated by cutting off a piece of the parent plant. Leaving out of consideration one or two other methods, the one most commonly brought to our notice is the reproduction of life through the seed or the egg. Now it is a matter of observation and a fact taught in every school botany, that in plants which transmit their life through seeds there must be a mingling of pollen in the blossom or there will be no seed. What does this mean? It means that here we have the beginnings of sex: that in the blossoms of plants there are both the male and the female elements and that these two elements must mingle if there is to be fruit or seed.”

The preacher thus led his audience away from any morbid or unchaste curiosity which may have impelled certain persons to desire to hear what he had to say. He sought to create the scientific attitude or atmosphere, and in a fair measure he accomplished his purpose. The rest of the half hour was given to setting forth the different methods by which life in the animal kingdom is passed on from parent to offspring, dwelling at length on the

preparation sometimes made by insects for offspring they were destined never to see, as their own death came before their eggs were hatched.

"Next Sunday evening," said David Baldwin in concluding his discourse, "I shall speak further on this same topic—The transmission of life—with especial reference to some facts concerning the possibilities of pre-natal culture, facts which all should carefully ponder who expect to invite the responsibilities of parenthood."

After the dismissal of the audience, Dr. Ellwood, head of the biological department of the university, waited to greet Baldwin.

"I wish to thank you, Mr. Baldwin," said he, shaking the preacher's hand warmly, "for the discourse this evening, and more especially for what is promised to follow. Often, very often indeed, I have wished to do what you are now undertaking; but the right opportunity in my case never seemed to appear. I most heartily approve of your purpose, and in my judgment you are doing a valuable service to the community."

"Thank you, Dr. Ellwood; your approval is worth very much to me. I am aware that I am laying myself open to all kinds of criticism."

"Quite possible," replied Dr. Ellwood. "Whoever has dared to do any new or neglected duty has had plenty of people to carp at him. But criticism should not deter you from going on."

Mr. Strong interrupted them.

"That was fine, Dominie," said he, using a term

of address with which he usually accosted Mr. Baldwin. "It was worth any ten evening sermons we've had in a long time. Let the good work go on!"

"I was so interested!" added Mrs. Strong, touching her pastor on the arm. "Why shouldn't a pastor discuss these topics? Do they not lie at the centre of things? I can't tell how many times I've come to church of a Sunday evening just to help sustain the service, as you said. But now I shall come because I want inspiration and guidance to aid me in doing a parent's duty to my children."

"Thank you very much. I only hope that others will feel in sympathy with what I'm trying to do."

"You mean the Triumvirate?"

"Yes."

"Of course there will be objections in that quarter: there always are objections from some, whenever anything new appears. But you mustn't mind. The Master had just such men to contend with, didn't he?"

In another part of the room two of the "triumvirs"—Deacon Long and Mr. Brand—were standing together. Mr. Driver rarely attended church of an evening.

"Well, what did you think of it?" asked the deacon, confidentially.

"A fine audience," replied the other, keeping the deacon in suspense.

“ But his discourse ? ”

“ Well, if that’s what he calls preaching the gospel, I would like to hear what the other thing would be.”

“ That’s what I thought—that’s what I thought, Brother Brand. Did you detect anything especially unsound in his discourse ? ”

The reply was lost as they passed out into the street.

XV

ON the following Tuesday afternoon as David Baldwin was leaving the University library, he met Dr. Ellwood, and the two men walked up the avenue together.

"I've been thinking, Mr. Baldwin, of transferring my membership to your church," said Dr. Ellwood, during the conversation, as they walked briskly along, facing a stiff breeze from the lake.

"Indeed? I am glad to hear it. You and Mrs. Ellwood will be most heartily welcome. Our church has altogether too few of the university families."

"Yes, too few; but it's not their fault. When we came here five years ago I attended the First Church several Sundays; both Mrs. Ellwood and myself belonged to your denomination. But we soon stopped going; we found nothing there for a modern man—instead, the emphasis, the point of view, the conceptions of life and duty, the attitude toward the Bible, were all of a century ago. I hold that it's a man's duty to go to church where he can get something that feeds him; so after a time we became members of Dr. Crockett's church. Here we have found a very congenial church home; but now—though denominationalism means very little to me—I would like to have some little part,

Mr. Baldwin, in helping on what you are undertaking to do here in Tioga."

"Thank you, Dr. Ellwood."

"Yours, I fancy, is not the easiest pastorate in the world. Of course, nearly everybody knows that the First Church here is run practically by two or three men. Some of us are watching with interest to see how far they will permit the new leaven to do its work. Now, about transferring our membership: if you will step into the house a moment, I will hand you our letters; I called for them at our last midweek service."

Dr. Ellwood's study was generously filled with books on two sides of the room, the cases reaching almost to the ceiling.

"Just make yourself at home a moment or two. I find that I have left the envelope containing those letters in the pocket of another coat. Excuse me, and I will get it."

David Baldwin seated himself near the open grate; but as his eyes wandered over the titles of the volumes in the case, at his left, he arose, his interest growing as he read shelf after shelf.

"I see that you are interested in comparative religion," said he, as Dr. Ellwood returned to the room. "I haven't seen so complete a collection of books on Comparative Religion since I left the University."

"Yes, the subject interests me. Several years ago I devoured everything I could find along that line."

"Indeed?"

"I was searching for light. It was becoming impossible for me to hold the religious conceptions upon which I had been brought up. The study of those works enabled me to find myself, to understand that religion is one thing——"

"A life."

"——and our beliefs, quite another."

"How well I remember the day when that difference was made clear to me."

"I can believe it. In my case it dawned gradually; but the relief was none the less great. Here are our church letters, Mr. Baldwin."

"Thank you. We will act on them this week. Next Sunday is our regular time for communion and you can receive the hand of fellowship then. I want you to feel at home among us at once."

As David walked on home he felt that the tide was turning in his favor. The Ellwoods were considered among the most cultured families of the city. Accordingly, it was with no small elation that he presented their letters at the close of the midweek service on the following Thursday evening.

"I have here," said he, "the church letters of Dr. and Mrs. Ellwood, who desire to become members with us."

That Dr. Ellwood had found the preaching in Dr. Crockett's church more to his liking, though he was denominationally allied to the First Church, was generally known; but for several Sundays

he had been one of Baldwin's most attentive hearers.

A silence settled over the little company as the pastor made his announcement.

"What is your pleasure?" he asked, looking over the audience. Any one could see that he was pleased to be able to present these names for membership.

At once Deacon Long rose to his feet.

"Before a motion is made," said he, "I wish to ask a question."

"Very well."

"Are these letters of Dr. and Mrs. Ellwood granted by a sister church of our denomination, in good and regular standing?" All eyes were riveted on the deacon whose attitude was that of a prosecuting attorney questioning a criminal.

"No," answered the pastor. "Dr. and Mrs. Ellwood come to us with letters granted by Dr. Crockett's church of this city."

The deacon's eyes snapped as he answered savagely:

"Then we cannot act upon them. Churches of our denomination receive letters only from sister churches in good and regular standing in the denomination."

Mr. Strong was instantly on his feet.

"But I see no reason, Brother Pastor, why the First Church should not receive letters from other churches."

"That's what I say!" exclaimed Mrs. Terry,

without rising. "To think of our hesitating to receive Dr. and Mrs. Ellwood!"

"It's unchristian!" exclaimed Mrs. Strong.

"Brother Pastor,"—it was Mr. Brand who had risen and was addressing the chair,—“as every member of our denomination ought to know, it is a settled practice with us to receive letters only from churches of like faith and order. To deviate from this practice would result in all sorts of irregularities. We believe in certain definite things. Now, if we accept letters from other denominations, we thereby acknowledge the validity of their creeds, and from that moment we cease to be a regular denominational church.”

"Brother Chairman," said Mrs. Wood, as she rose with quiet dignity and waited an instant for the pastor's recognition, "I am in favor of receiving these letters. Dr. and Mrs. Ellwood are well known to each of us. Their excellent Christian character is beyond question. Would they be any better if they came to us with letters from a church of our own denomination? I for one care not what our past usage has been. If it is not broad and Christlike,—let's change it. By all means let us not place any obstacle in the way of the Ellwoods becoming members with us!"

Immediately Deacon Long rose to reply.

"It's not a matter of placing obstacles in the way of any one who wishes to join our church; it's not a matter which pertains to Dr. and Mrs. Ellwood's Christian character. The point is: as a

regular church of our denomination we cannot accept letters from churches of other faith and practice. Further, article 3, section 20, of our by-laws reads as follows: 'No change in the policy or established custom of this church shall be made by any officer or committee, or by any action in any mid-week service.' This means that the policy of this church can be changed only by vote at the annual business meeting."

"Are we to understand," asked the pastor trying to speak calmly, "that this section of the by-laws is meant to compel us to walk in the exact steps of our predecessors? that because they did things in a certain way, we must do the same?"

"It means," replied Deacon Long with more warmth than was absolutely becoming in a deacon when speaking to his pastor, "it means that this church is intended to remain true to the practices of the denomination however much some may desire to the contrary."

"Brethren," said the pastor, his calm, deliberate manner little indicating the indignation he was holding in check, "at the next annual business meeting of this church I shall propose to drop this section from our by-laws. It's suicidal! But at present I suppose there is nothing to do but abide by it. The meeting is adjourned."

Several of the members at once gathered about the pastor.

"Such a shame!" cried Mrs. Strong. "It's the most unchristian thing these men have

done in a long time. What will the Ellwoods think?"

"But what I cannot understand is why that section has been permitted to remain in the by-laws so long—nearly forty years, I'm told," said Baldwin to those near him.

"Just bring the subject up at the next annual meeting and you will know more about it," said Mrs. Terry.

"Yes, that section is one of his pets."

"Whose?"

"Mr. Driver's."

"I see," said Baldwin.

While this conversation was going on near the pastor, Mrs. Long, Mrs. Brand, Mrs. Goodwin, and Mrs. North held themselves stiffly aloof.

"If it wasn't for my husband and Brother Brand," Mrs. Long was saying to Mrs. North, "I can't imagine what *would* become of this church!"

"They certainly *do* have their hands full. Mr. Baldwin don't seem to know exactly what belongs to our denominational usage."

"That's because he's not a true member of the denomination!" exclaimed Mrs. Brand who had overheard the remark. "How can a man be a member of the denomination and hold such beliefs as he does? My husband—you know he used to be a pastor years ago before his throat gave out—my husband says that Mr. Baldwin is terribly unsound in his doctrine. Such a pity, isn't it?"

"It is a pity. His sermons would be so helpful if it wasn't for that."

"Yes. My husband says that so many of the young ministers are unsound in their doctrine, nowadays. I wonder what the church is coming to?"

"What do you suppose is the matter?" asked Mrs. North, as they stepped into the vestibule, stopping a moment to adjust their wraps before facing the outside zero atmosphere.

"Why, my husband says it's all due to what's called the 'new theology.' But just what that is I can't make out. But it must be something dreadful to attack religion in that way."

"Yes, it must be something *very* dreadful. There's my car. Good-night."

"Good-night," responded Mrs. Brand.

XVI

MRS. HARRINGTON was born a diplomat: she had a natural aptitude for taking advantage of circumstances. Further, this aptitude had been so persistently cultivated during her little more than twoscore of years that it had developed into a passion—this taking advantage of circumstances—which led her to do many things of which she otherwise would never have thought. So thoroughly did this passion become a dominating factor in her life that it was absolutely painful to her to let any opportunity for exercising her skill go unused. When this is understood it will be easy to comprehend that Mrs. Harrington was not infrequently impelled to turn circumstances to her own account, even when it required a little duplicity to effect the desired end.

So long had she continued using phrases and expressions she did not really mean, the habit had become not only second but first nature to her. It must be confessed, however, that Mrs. Harrington was not very unlike many other people in this respect. The principal difference is, perhaps, one of degree. Mrs. Harrington's mastery of the diplomatic art made her a charming person to meet in casual conversation, and her friends—she had her full share—soon learned to value her word

for just about what it was worth ; and in this way her many good qualities were not neutralized by her ruling passion.

Mrs. Harrington was an ardent admirer of her pastor, the Reverend David Baldwin, as she always introduced him to her friends. Rarely did she leave the morning service without meeting him long enough to express her admiration of his "beautiful and eloquent sermon."

In making his calls, the pastor had met her a few times in her own home ; but he had never found it convenient to stay to dinner, as she had more than once pressed him to do, owing to some other demands on his time.

Not long after the holidays, in making his round of calls in that part of the city, David Baldwin called at the Harrington home. As usual, Mrs. Baldwin accompanied him.

Mrs. Harrington herself answered their ring.

"Come right in. I saw you coming up the walk and didn't wait for Nora to admit you. How glad I am to see you ! Seems an age since you were here last. Mrs. Baldwin, what a fine color you have. No, take this chair ; you will find it more comfortable."

"We scarcely had time to stop, but we thought we would run in for a few minutes."

"Indeed ! I should have felt slighted if you hadn't. It's early yet."

"But Mr. Baldwin has to attend a committee meeting at an unusually early hour this evening."

"Miss Adams, whose mother is ill, as you know, wished the hour at a quarter before seven. This cuts the afternoon short," added the minister.

"That's too bad. Excuse me just a moment while I speak to Nora."

Mrs. Harrington withdrew to the kitchen.

"Don't be in any hurry with the dinner, Nora. The minister and his wife are here. I shall ask them to stay, of course; but I'm quite certain that they ——"

"I was just goin' to ask what extra preparations I should make."

"Oh, make none at all."

"Why ——"

"Of course, Nora, I shall have to ask them to stay to dinner, but they'll not stay. He has to attend an early committee meeting. It's fortunate, too, with only those odds and ends in the pantry, left from yesterday. So make no changes in our picked up dinner."

On her return to the parlor Mrs. Harrington found Mrs. Baldwin alone, examining some new music which lay open on the piano.

"Lillian has just carried Mr. Baldwin off to the library."

"Oh, to show him her new set of Scott. Her grandmother gave it to her as a birthday present."

"Lillian is fond of reading?"

"Very. She divides her time between books and music."

"This piece of music interests me especially: I

notice it is composed by an old friend in the East."

"Cogswell? Are you acquainted with Homer Emerson Cogswell? Tell me about him. His music has recently become so very popular. He is quite the rage, you know."

Mrs. Baldwin's narrative consumed several minutes.

"I am so glad to meet some one who knows him personally; it's almost like meeting the man himself—knowing him by proxy, as it were."

"His success, however, is not without qualification."

"Indeed! How is that?"

"You see his earlier compositions were but indifferently received; it was not until he set to music some of the poems of this author that he came into prominence. The words have a charm of their own. Taken together, the effect of the composition is highly pleasing."

"You are acquainted with the writer of the words also?"

"Oh, yes; while in Vassar I knew her well. She was our president's wife; I noticed the other day a flattering review of a volume of verse she has recently published."

"What a privilege to meet such celebrities. That's part of the advantage of a college course, isn't it? Let me see, the name of the president at Vassar is ——"

"Smith."

"Oh, yes; I should have remembered. I cannot tell you, Mrs. Baldwin, how delighted I am to hear of these people. Here in Minnesota we are a little removed from literary and musical genius. You and Mr. Baldwin must stay to dinner with us: Mr. Harrington is absent from the city and will not be back till a little after six, but we need not wait for him."

"Thank you, Mrs. Harrington; it's kind of you to want us to stay. But it's impossible this evening. Mr. Baldwin desires to meet with that committee; and we must hurry back. We have our own dinner, you know, at one, and take only a light lunch at six."

"But you have never eaten with us yet," persisted Mrs. Harrington, more and more certain of her ground; "and I am beginning to feel just the least bit jealous of some of the members of the church with whom you have ——"

"Indeed! Mrs. Harrington, we have called here quite frequently; more often, in fact, than on many of the church families."

"None too often, and far from often enough to suit me; but you and Mr. Baldwin have never taken lunch or dinner with me yet. I always like to have my pastor feel at home at our house, to just drop in any time and take a meal with us."

"We will surely do so soon, Mrs. Harrington; and I regret that it is impossible for us to stay now."

"Yes; Lillian would be so pleased to hear you

relate whatever you could recall concerning the authors of her favorite music. Shall I not speak to Mr. Baldwin? Do you not think I could persuade him to stay?"

"If it wasn't for that committee meeting; he has promised to meet a committee from the Young People's Society and assist them in outlining some new work for the rest of the winter. I know he considers the meeting very important and ——"

"Well, I am so disappointed. I had hoped that you could stay this time; but of course a pastor's time is not his own. We are very proud of our pastor, Mrs. Baldwin. How the evening audiences have increased! Why, last Sunday evening the church was filled to overflowing—they had to open the lecture room—a thing they haven't had to do before since the day of its dedication!—Why, Lillian, where have you left Mr. Baldwin?" looking up at her daughter who was entering the room alone.

"He is at the 'phone, mamma. He thinks my set of Scott is just splendid!"

"Mrs. Adams is worse," said the minister returning to the parlor. "Her daughter has been trying to reach me for the last half hour. She tells me that it will be impossible for her to meet with the committee and asks to have the meeting postponed."

"And you have postponed it?"

"Yes; for Miss Adams is the central force of

that committee. I've just sent word to the other members."

"I am sorry about Mrs. Adams ; it's too bad that her health is so uncertain. Mrs. Harrington has asked us to stay for dinner : I told her we couldn't possibly stay this time, but ——"

"Thank you, Mrs. Harrington ; now that committee meeting is postponed, we can stay just as well as not. Come to think about it, we have never broken bread with you yet, have we?"

Mrs. Harrington covered her confusion by asking Lillian to play something, and excusing herself again she fled to the kitchen.

"Goodness gracious, Nora ; they are going to stay after all ! We haven't a single thing in the house that's fit to eat."

"And it's too late now to send in any orders," added Nora.

"Well, we must do the best we can with what we have on hand," groaned the woman who prided herself on the presentableness of her table. "What a shame to be caught this way—by the minister and his wife, too !"

Nora had her own opinion on the matter, but she discreetly refrained from giving it utterance.

Meanwhile Lillian was relating to the minister and his wife some instances concerning her little brother Edgar.

"He wanted a wheel, a bicycle like papa's ; and in his prayers he asked the Lord to send him one for a birthday present. For several weeks be-

fore his birthday he added this petition to his little prayer every night. Well, papa and mamma thought he was not quite old enough to manage a bicycle so they bought a nice tricycle for him ; and on the morning of his birthday we put it in his room where he could see it the first thing when he awoke."

"What did he say when he saw it?"

"That was just what we wanted to hear. Some of us hid in the corner where he couldn't see us but where we could see him. We didn't have to wait long. Soon he began to stir and rub his eyes; then all at once he raised himself up on his elbow and looked around. His eyes fell on the tricycle. A look of disgust swept over his face. I could hardly keep from laughing.

" 'Why, Dod,' said he, looking scornfully at the object which had aroused his disgust, 'tought you noo mor'n dis. Humph! not to know th' difference 'tween a bike an' dat ting!' We thought it was too cute for anything."

"Did he use the tricycle?"

"He wouldn't touch it! And for several nights he didn't want to say his prayers. Mamma just had to make him say 'em."

"The poor little man!" said Miriam.

"Yes, he took the matter so much to heart, papa bought him a wheel."

"Did he think that the Lord sent it?"

"Yes; you should have heard him the night after he got it. He told the Lord all about how

glad he was, and even promised to forgive him for the mistake he had made in not sending the 'bike' at first."

"Such little folks must be very interesting. Some children are so much more original than others."

"Indeed, they are. And Edgar is so original. He is all the time asking such unexpected questions. But I must tell you of another one of his prayers. It was some time ago. Mamma was just teaching him to kneel and repeat a little prayer. One of the phrases in the prayer was 'And keep Edgar a good boy.' He was still in dresses and he had been teasing mamma to make him a pair of pants. Well, one night mamma was ill and papa put Edgar to bed. The little fellow was sleepy and when he came to say his prayers papa had to help him in two or three places.

"'And make Edgar'—papa began, when they came to that part of the prayer. Now mamma had always used the words, 'And *keep* Edgar—a good boy.' But papa used the word 'make' and it aroused an unexpected response in the little boy's sleepy brain.

"'And make Edgar—a pair of pants,' was the way he finished the phrase."

"He knew what he really wanted even if he was half asleep," laughed the minister.

"And such questions as he asks! I'm sure I never asked such questions when I was his age. One day he came into mamma's sewing-room,

walked right up to her and asked if God could make anything he wanted to. Mamma replied that she thought he could. Edgar stood a moment.

“‘I wish he'd make some wasser wivout th' wet to it,' said he, glancing down at his wet shoes.”

“Water without the wet to it ! That was quite an idea.”

“At another time he wanted to know if God could make a piece of paper with only one side to it. And if he has asked one, he has asked a thousand questions. Sometimes they are the result of his own observation.

“‘What is it that has two wings and cannot fly?' Papa tried to guess but had to give it up.

“‘A robin with a broken wing,' shouted Edgar gleefully. He had seen one that morning out in the back yard.”

“It must have taken considerable reasoning to ask such a question. Children doubtless learn to reason much earlier than we are accustomed to think.”

“But Edgar, we think, is quite the exception. You would have laughed to hear him one night last summer. One of the neighbor boys was over to play with Tom, and these two didn't want Edgar about ; he was too little to join in their fun, whatever it was. So they thought they would scare him ; and then he'd leave them alone.

“The two older boys managed to slip away from Edgar and hide in the cellarway. He looked

around and finally opened the cellar door and peered down. All was dark. Thinking to frighten him, Tom, in a very sepulchral voice, said—

“‘I’m a boogger.’

“‘I’m a boogger,’ said the other boy, in the same unearthly tone.

“They supposed Edgar would close the door and run away. But he didn’t. He put his head a little further in the darkness, and in a voice exactly similar to the other boys’, said—

“‘And I’m a boogger, too!’”

“Couldn’t fool him.”

“No. The boys had to let him play with them, though he was three or four years younger.”

“I suppose there are some stories told about you and Tom—what you did or said when you were real young?” said the minister.

“Not many. Edgar seems to be the only one in our family in that line. Though Tom did get his hand into a crock of milk one time when he thought he was reaching up where the cookies were. But mamma had moved them. He didn’t know what to do with the cream that stuck to his fingers. He tasted of it and it was sour. He was about to wipe it on his trousers when he happened to think that mamma would be sure to see it if he did that. At last a happy thought struck him: his hair was long and curly—just the place.

“After a few minutes he walked into the sitting-

room where mamma had callers. Soon she observed something strange about his head.

“‘Why, Tom, what’s this in your hair?’ she said, drawing him nearer the window.

“‘Nothin’,’ said Tom.

“‘Why, child, it looks like cream. Oh, I know all about it now. I changed the cookie crock this morning. So Tom has been into mother’s cookies?’

“Tom’s reply has passed into a proverb.

“‘No, mamma; I wasn’t into the cookies. I was just a looking for my fishline.’”

“Tom will be sent to Congress some day,” observed the minister. “And now, Lillian, what stories do they tell about you?”

“Oh, nothing of any importance.”

“But let us hear one of them.”

“It doesn’t amount to very much. But I’ve heard mamma tell it several times. When I was a little tot she found me one rainy Sunday afternoon up-stairs, kneeling down by my bed, and saying my prayers over and over and over. Finally she asked me what I was doing it for.

“‘Why, don’t you see? I’m sayin’ a lot of ’em up ahead.’

“‘Saying your prayers up ahead?’ asked mamma, astonished at my remark. ‘What are you saying your prayers up ahead for?’ She says that I replied:

“‘So I won’t be bovered with ’em for a dood while.’”

"You were quite in line, Lillian, with a very popular custom," laughed the minister; "that of packing enough religion into Sunday to last the rest of the week."

The dinner was late. When they went out, though a heroic effort had been made to save the day, it was evident that Mrs. Harrington had not expected them to stay, despite the fact that she had warmly urged them to do so. Let us not blame Mrs. Harrington too severely, for it is more than probable that other ladies—not born diplomats either—have urged their friends to stay to dinner when at the same time they were fearful lest their invitations be accepted. If only we were all gifted with some subtle power of insight to enable us to discern when our hosts really meant what they said! Yes, but what revelations would sometimes appear! Doubtless human society is better off without such power of insight.

His church calls troubled David Baldwin not a little. He soon found that all the elderly ladies in his congregation felt they had a special claim on him and expected him to call every few weeks; and if he did not call as often as their former pastor had done, they felt slighted. There were also several families who needed to be called on frequently to keep them regular in their church attendance. If the pastor did not call about so often, they would relapse into indifference toward their church duties.

While Miriam accompanied him as often as possible in making his calls, there were times when her duties at home made this impossible. As the male portion of the family was usually absent when he called, David soon learned, instinctively, to skip certain places when Miriam was not with him.

"Why?" asked Miriam, innocently.

"People would soon begin to 'talk.'"

"Surely, David, you cannot mean——" and Miriam hesitated.

"Yes; I mean that it would be the easiest thing in the world for the minister to lose his reputation by thoughtlessly calling a few times alone on some of the families of his congregation."

"But, David, what wrong would there be in your calling alone?"

"No wrong whatever in itself; the harm consists in what certain other people—neighborhood gossips—would say about it."

"Is that the reason you always take me with you to certain places?"

"Yes."

"But how can you tell where such places are—the homes where people would talk if you called there alone?"

"By instinct or, in a woman, I suppose it would be called intuition. Of course in the majority of cases I feel that nothing, whatever, would be said. I run in quite frequently at Mrs. Wood's—the doctor is nearly always out or busy, but that

doesn't make any difference. Mrs. Wood and I have the best of chats. She says she sometimes gets more out of them than from my sermons."

"She was telling me just the other day how much she enjoyed your calls."

"It's so easy to talk with her on religious subjects. She has been unsatisfied with many of the older positions for a long while, but has been holding on to them because she thought she must."

"Possessing beliefs that did not possess her."

"She couldn't have stated her own case more exactly herself. She was brought up on the substitutionary theory of the atonement—that Christ was punished in our stead. When she came to think independently on these great themes, this view of Christ's work—that his sufferings were to appease the wrath of God—gave her such a terrible conception of God that she began to doubt and question it."

"I am so glad that you have been able to help her. It must be such a satisfaction!"

"Indeed it is! A few such experiences go a good way in offsetting some others not so agreeable. I shall never forget the time when Mrs. Wood caught the newer conception of Christ's sacrifice. Her countenance, always clothed with serenity, fairly glowed as the cloud of perplexity disappeared.

"I shall not soon forget the joyous note in her tone as she said —

“‘I see it now! Why, it is what I have always wanted to believe, but did not dare: Christ’s sufferings were not punishment, but the inevitable results of living a life of holy love in a sinful world.’

“After we had talked a while longer she made another statement that I shall always remember.”

“What was it?” asked Miriam.

“‘Oh, how much more humane God becomes when we look at Christ’s sufferings in that way!’

“Indeed, I feel that there are few greater privileges or deeper joys than to open doors into newer and broader and deeper conceptions of reality. But the cost of it!”

Miriam looked into her husband’s eyes, questioning.

“Yet the man who would not give his life for the privilege of opening doors, is unworthy of that high service to his age.”

“That was the price that the Christ had to pay.”

“Yes,” repeated David with unwonted solemnity; “that was the price the Christ had to pay.”

XVII

IT was the third Monday after Easter—David Baldwin's second Easter as pastor of his church. The pastor was in his study writing some letters. While the forenoon was yet young, a caller was announced.

"Ah, good-morning, Mr. Driver."

David Baldwin rose from his desk and extended his hand.

"Let me take your hat. You will find that chair by the window quite comfortable."

Mr. Driver took his pastor's hand very coldly.

"No—can't stay—won't be worth while to sit down."

With no attempt to conceal a disturbed state of mind, the pastor's caller jerked these words out, bit them off savagely and hurled them into the air with an intensity which charged the atmosphere with their heat. Baldwin felt the difference even if the thermometer did not.

"No," ignoring the chair, and holding his gray felt hat in his hand, "I'll not sit down. When I've got something to say to a man, I want to stand on my feet."

He walked nervously from one side of the room to the other, then, turning, he faced his pastor with a question,

"That ritualistic nonsense!—I want to know,"

young man, how much longer you are intending to keep it up?"

The speaker's gray eyes fairly snapped; his outstretched arm quivered with unspoken rage; his tone, had he been denouncing the most heinous practice known to man, could not have expressed more venom; his words fairly hissed as he spat them out of his throat.

"I've come to ask you a fair and square question—it's not my way to beat 'round the bush, for when I've got anything to say, I say it right to a man's face—I want to know how long you propose to keep up that ritualistic nonsense you started three Sundays ago?"

"Why, I——" began the pastor, utterly unconscious till that moment that he had given offense in the direction indicated.

"For if you are determined to persist in continuing this thing, I am here to say, young man, that I am hostile to it!" He ground the word "hostile" almost to powder as he held it an instant between his teeth. "Yes, sir, I am hostile to it!" raising his voice to an exclamatory pitch.

"These responses, this ritualistic nonsense, you've introduced, smack of the ritualism of Rome," he hissed. "If this goes on unchecked, if we tamely submit to this pernicious innovation, young man, who can tell but that the next thing you do you'll be burning incense and wearing a surplice—the very livery of hell!"

David Baldwin stood at the back of his study

chair, his hand tightening nervously as he grasped the projecting corner. To reply or to interrupt was alike useless; for Driver, with only a pause to get his breath, poured forth another broadside.

"So far as your preaching is concerned I have little fault to find. In many ways I like it: your sermons often accord with my own thoughts. Doctrines come and go. We have ours; other generations have had their own. But, young man, the customs of this church,—if you intend to insist on changing the customs of this church,—that is quite a different matter. I want you to understand you are not hired for that purpose. For over fifty years I've been a member of this church,—its customs are dear to me, associated as they are with the most sacred things of my life—and do you suppose I'll tamely submit to your innovations at this late date? I tell you I'll fight 'em to the bitter end—yes, to the bitter end!

"I'm hostile to that ritual you have introduced. If you feel bound to continue using it, let me say to you right here and now: this church will soon need another pastor. For either you or I will have to get out, and I don't intend to leave. I have told you plainly how I feel about these responses and the rest of your ritualistic nonsense. Now that you know my opinion, perhaps you can tell me what you intend to do?"

He stood in the middle of the floor, in the attitude of a superior power, having just issued an ultimatum, a fine picture if only the occasion had

been more worthy of his mettle. In his own mind it *was* worthy—more's the pity—for while he was favorable to many of the newer positions in doctrine, to changes in customs or methods, he was uncompromising in his opposition. In his mind the First Church was identified with certain customs and practices: these were the central things, these he loved with partisan intensity, loved as the martyrs had loved the things which led them to endure the blaze of fagots, the torture of the rack. If occasion could have arisen, he would gladly have given his life for the things he held dear—the customs and practices of his church; as his martyr ancestors had given their lives in witness to cherished doctrines and beliefs.

Unfortunately, the zeal of the martyr, when opportunity permits, is all too easily transformed into the zeal of the inquisitor, a matter of attitude determined by the lack or the possession of power. Are not the pages of history replete with such examples where the lack of power makes the inquisitor into a martyr, and the possession of power, the martyr into an inquisitor?

Power of a most convincing nature lay in the hands of Amos Driver: he was the largest contributor in the membership of his church. In full consciousness of this power, he stood before his pastor.

“I slept scarcely a wink last night,” he went on fiercely; “this perverse nonsense you’ve introduced into the church service has upset me so!

And it was the same thing last week. Why, I didn't get settled down so that I could sleep till the middle of the week. Young man, I'm too old to stand any changes in our church service. For fifty years things have gone on unchanged. Some few of your predecessors have felt called upon to introduce pernicious innovations, but I have fought 'em, every one to the bitter end.

"And what became of every one of these men that insisted on changing the customs of this church? Young man, I ask again—what became of these men? They soon found it convenient to resign. Yes, sir; they all had to leave, persuaded doubtless that the Lord had work for them in some other field. Humph! What excuses ministers trump up sometimes when they are forced to resign!—The Lord calling them to another field. Bah! But that's neither here nor there. What I want you to understand is that no man can long remain the pastor of this church without my consent. And now I want to know if you are determined to keep up the use of that ritual you introduced three Sundays ago?"

"I am sorry, Mr. Driver," began David Baldwin, speaking calmly, his voice giving evidence of restrained pressure; "I am exceedingly sorry that anything I have done ——"

"That's not the point! Answer my question! What do I care whether you are sorry or not. Just as if that would mend matters. Humph! Are you going to continue the use of that ritual?"

That's what I want to know. Answer my question," fiercely, taking a step near his pastor, and glaring at him with eyes emitting intense anger.

"Perhaps I don't quite understand what you mean, Mr. Driver," began David Baldwin. "Your language is more familiar to yourself than to me. But if I am able to comprehend your meaning, you are displeased with certain changes I have made in our church service, changes calculated to add richness and variety to our worship. You are the first one, Mr. Driver, who has had anything to say against these changes, while a score of people have said something to me in their favor.

"Without the least previous intimation of your displeasure, you now demand that I discontinue the use of these responses, though their use is sanctioned by the rest of the church. You ——"

"Young man! I didn't come here to debate this subject with you," snapped Mr. Driver, impatiently. "I don't care what the rest of the congregation want. Most people have no mind of their own. Whatever the minister does is law and gospel to them. But *I've* a mind of *my* own! I know what belongs to the service of a church of our denomination, if they don't. And I want these innovations, that smack of popery, to cease. Understand?"

"I think I understand, Mr. Driver."

"Well? You haven't answered my question yet."

"The only answer I can give at present is that I will take into consideration what you ——"

"Consideration—your grandmother! What do I care whether you take the matter into consideration or not," scornfully. "You have got ordinary common sense, ain't you? Well, then, answer my question at once! I will repeat it again, very slowly, so that even a blockhead—I'm not saying that you are one—could understand it and give his answer without all this delay: Will you or will you not discontinue—discontinue means, young man, to stop and stop at once—that ritualistic nonsense which you have seen fit to lug into our church service during the past three Sundays? *Answer me!*"

"The only answer I can possibly give you, Mr. Driver, is that I will take into consideration what you have said, and whatever seems best, in view of everything concerned, why, that will be the course to pursue. But just what that course will be, I cannot at this moment tell."

"But I insist," shouted Driver, angrily. "I insist on your answering my question!"

"My hearing is very good, Mr. Driver. There is no need of shouting. I can understand perfectly what you say if you speak in an ordinary tone. You have my answer. I can give you no other. But permit me to say, Mr. Driver, I am exceedingly sorry ——"

"Your grandmother!" exclaimed Driver, unable in other words to give vent to his scorn, his pas-

sion something beautiful to behold. "If I had as little sense, young man, as some ministers seem to have, I'd—I'd—yes, I'd become a preacher myself. But thank the Lord, I haven't come to that yet. Go on, young man; go on. I fight in the open. Don't blame me if this church is needing another pastor before long—blame your own perversity. Now do just what you see fit."

He turned upon his heel and vanished.

Left alone, David Baldwin stood as one in a trance. Could it be true?—could it possibly be true? Was it not all an awful dream? Had he actually heard the words that were still ringing in his ears? What had he done to call down upon himself this terrible avalanche of scalding words? His temples throbbed, his face burned, a tightness clutched him about the heart, a brick of immense size seemed to be lodged in his stomach. He went to the window and opened it wide—the air of his study was charged with those hissing words!

He sat down and tried to think.

"I might have been a little more conciliatory: but it was all so sudden. Did I do right in refusing to comply with his demand? Should a church ——"

A soft knocking at his study door brought him out of his reverie.

"Why, Mrs. Wood! Come right in. How are you this morning?"

"I'm well, thank you," taking the chair he of-

ferred her. "Mr. Driver has been to see you, hasn't he?"

"Yes, he has just gone."

"Mrs. Driver told me last evening on our way home from church that her husband had taken a violent dislike to the changes you have made in the morning service. Mrs. Driver feels so sorry; she was afraid that he would cause you some trouble. Strange, that he should get so worked up over such a matter! Mrs. Driver said he was so upset that it was impossible for him to sleep!"

"I am very sorry. Mrs. Driver or some one should have told me. It is not my desire to annoy any one; and as a personal matter I would have done almost anything rather than discomfort Mr. Driver or any one else. But coming to me as he did, in the spirit of a dictator, I feel that it is altogether another matter."

"I can imagine what he said was not very pleasant to hear."

"Well, of course, he is an old man and scarcely knew what he was saying. I tried hard to be patient with him."

"His temper is something awful when it's aroused. It's hard to understand how he can be so delightfully liberal in his theology and so, so immovably conservative in regard to the customs and practices of the church."

"One would think that these customs had been delivered to the church by special revelation, and that he was their divinely appointed guardian.

Has he always been this way? I mean since you have known him, Mrs. Wood?"

"Yes; only I think he is worse as he gets older."

"From what he said I begin to understand why this church has had nearly twenty-five pastors during the past fifty years. No church can thrive under such conditions."

"I know it. We all know it. But what are we to do? Our membership is small."

"No wonder."

"And most of the members are in very ordinary circumstances, financially. Mr. Driver is our only wealthy member. Mr. Brand comes next. Mr. Driver gives very liberally to the church. His pocketbook is always open. But he has his notions and is very set in his way. We have always given in to him because that was the only way we could get along."

"I feel sure, Mrs. Wood, that the church would be much stronger to-day if the rest of the members had not given in to him. Why, during the past quarter of a century the other churches in this city have doubled their membership, some of them, two or three times. What has this church done? Scarcely held its own."

"I know it. I sometimes think that this church has wonderful vitality or it must have died long ago. How provoking that Mr. Driver should annoy *you* now that we seem to be taking on new life again. It was nice of the Ellwoods, wasn't it,

to keep on coming to our church after that disgraceful haggling over their church letters? That section in our by-laws, we owe to Mr. Driver."

"I can well believe it from the use he makes of it."

"Oh, I think a minister's life must be so hard. I used to think it would be grand to have Harold study for the ministry; but I have changed my mind. I wouldn't want a boy of mine to be a minister for the world. Such haggling! Such unreasoned opposition! I don't see how a minister can stand it. *I* couldn't—it would kill me!"

"You have heard, haven't you, of backs being fitted for their burdens? Well, I'm coming to believe that there's a good deal of truth in the saying. Why, if any one had told me two years ago that I could have stood some of the things I have stood, I wouldn't have believed it. If I deviate the least particle from the established customs of the church, Mr. Driver hauls me up; if I present any phase of the religious experience in a different manner, or give a new emphasis to any old truth, or in any way interpret life from the modern point of view, then Mr. Brand and Deacon Long are after me."

"Oh, it's a shame! I do wish something could be done. Are other churches like this?"

"Indeed, I hope not, Mrs. Wood. The church situation is something like this: in every denomination now there are coming to be two parties or rather groups; and there is more distinctive dif-

ference between these two groups within the denominations than there is between the denominations, themselves."

"You mean that in every denomination, some hold to the older thought, and some to the new?"

"Yes. Broadly speaking the religious world is not divided into denominations, but rather into these two great divisions—those who cherish the doctrines they have inherited and believe that these are final expressions of religious truth; that all men should accept them,—this is the one great group. Its members are found everywhere."

"The group to which I used to belong," said Mrs. Wood. "I thought it was a sin to doubt any of the beliefs on which I had been brought up."

"Yes, most of us were brought up in this group and know by painful experience—those of us who have left it—how hard it was, the transition into the other section. Many have made this transition not of choice but of necessity, being unable longer to interpret their religious experience in the terms of their inherited beliefs."

"Indeed, I know just what that means, Mr. Baldwin. For years I held to some of the older doctrines, though they didn't satisfy me. I was driven into the newer thought even against my will."

"In most churches," continued Mr. Baldwin, "there are adherents of both of these great sections. Of course in some instances churches are

all one or the other. With us the contest is on."

"It certainly is. But it must be some relief to be able to understand it," rising. "I must be going. How is Mrs. Baldwin?"

"She is well, thank you. Feel free to run in any time. Good-morning."

David Baldwin sat down again at his desk. He was calm now and it seemed a long time ago,—that other call from Mr. Driver.

"I will ask the members at the midweek service to express their opinion concerning the changes I have made in the morning service. That will be the best way, and I'll ask Mr. Driver to be present, so that both sides may be heard." Having formulated this plan, David Baldwin dismissed the subject so far as he could from his mind.

XVIII

“**W**HY, girls, what’s the matter?” asked Mrs. Stewart, as her daughters were returning from prayer-meeting.

“Oh, such a time as we had to-night!”

“A perfect circus, mother! ’Twas worse than a circus.”

“I never witnessed such a disgraceful affair!”

Mary and Cora and Elizabeth were all talking at once.

“And in a church, too!”

“It was worse than any political meeting, mother.”

“I felt so sorry for Mrs. Baldwin!”

“And for Mr. Baldwin, too!”

Mrs. Stewart looked from one to the other of her daughters as they entered the sitting-room.

“Oh, mother, such a time as we had at prayer-meeting to-night!”

“It broke up in confusion!”

“It was this way, mother,” said Mary disregarding the interruptions of the other girls; “before the close of the service Mr. Baldwin said that he wished to know how the members present felt about the value of the responses and other changes he had introduced in the morning service; that some had spoken to him heartily in their favor,

while there were others who did not approve of them."

"Well?"

"He went on to say," continued Mary, "that the church was a community of individuals bound together for their common good—that each should desire what was for the good of the greatest number."

"Yes."

"He said he did not wish to bring the matter to a vote, but simply to know how various individuals regarded these changes—whether they were helpful or not in adding richness to the church service."

"I see nothing in this to get excited over," commented Mrs. Stewart.

"But wait, mother; just wait!" cried Cora. "The excitement came after this."

"Yet you could almost feel that something was going to happen. I know I did," added Elizabeth.

"After the minister said he wanted every one to feel perfectly free to say exactly what they thought as to these changes,—before any one else had time to get on their feet or say a word, Mr. Driver got up and ——"

"From the look on his face, the rest of us just sat there and held our breath," said Cora.

"Yes," added Elizabeth; "the room got so still!"

"The Stone girls, sitting near me, were if anything more frightened than I was."

"Mr. Driver," repeated Mary, "got up and without saying a word made his way to the open space in front——"

"Just off to the left of where the pastor sits."

"Near the door leading into the auditorium."

"——and stood so that he faced both the pastor and the rest of us."

"His eyes snapped!"

"Oh, mother, it was simply awful!"

"But, Mary, what did he say? You don't mean to tell me that Mr. Driver simply stood there without saying anything. Tell me, child, what did he say?" with some impatience.

"What didn't he say? Why, mother, for fifteen minutes he poured forth such a stream of abusive language as I hope never to be compelled to listen to again. He charged Mr. Baldwin with attacking the established customs of the denomination; that he, a young man, was taking it upon himself to reform the settled practices of centuries; that he was introducing the ritual of Rome and would soon be burning incense. Oh, I can't tell you what he *didn't* say!"

"He addressed the pastor personally—he said 'you'—'*you*' are doing this—'*you*' are doing that."

"His words were simply awful. But the tone in which he spoke was a thousand times worse!"

"Yes, his manner gave a double edge to everything he said."

"I never knew that a man could be so abusive!"

"What did Mr. Baldwin do?" asked Mrs. Stewart.

"What did he do? Why, mother, just what the rest of us did—he sat still—amazed—non-plussed—spellbound. Oh, it was like witnessing the rush of Niagara: one simply forgot all else. I've heard Mr. Driver explode before; but never, *never* like this! There wasn't an abusive word in the dictionary—in his dictionary—that he didn't use. He couldn't possibly have been more insulting than he was to Mr. Baldwin."

"And at the close of a prayer-meeting!"

"You see, mother, Mr. Driver is very much opposed to changing any of the customs of the church. He was afraid lest some of us should speak in favor of these changes: so he opened fire first. He talked so long and so abusively, the meeting simply broke up before any one else could say anything. Many of the ladies left the room in tears."

"And was the minister's wife there, you say?" asked the mother, anxiously.

"Yes. She left the room. Great tears were streaming down her cheeks as she went out."

"Too bad! Too bad! The worst possible thing for a woman in her condition," said Mrs. Stewart, sympathetically. "She should be saved from all excitement."

"But, mother," persisted Mary, "a prayer-meeting should be a safe place for *any one* to go—even an expectant mother—shouldn't it?"

“Certainly, my dear ; certainly, under ordinary circumstances. But in our church, it seems, one can never tell what’s going to happen next.”

“I suppose it will be Mr. Brand’s turn now. These men usually take turns in creating such disturbances.”

Strange to relate, this remark contained the elements of a prediction.

XIX

THERE are some experiences in life impossible of description. Before your first visit to the seashore you had read well-written descriptions of the ocean ; but words and sentences and skill of rhetoric did not convey to you a hundredth part of the meaning which you yourself found as you sat for hours gazing far out upon that restless, boundless deep. So, too, the young soldier, in his first actual engagement with the enemy, learns that less than a thousandth part of the reality of battle has ever been transferred to the printed page or could be thus transferred.

In a similar manner Mary Stewart and her sisters found words but poor, weak instruments, in their endeavor to make their mother realize what had happened at that memorable prayer-meeting, although they were accustomed to using words, were these sisters. But more than once Mary had to resort to such phrases as,—“Why, mother, it was simply awful ; it was terrible.”

The opinions of others at the meeting were equally decided.

“The most abusive speech one man could possibly make to another,” said Mrs. Strong. And Mrs. Terry corroborated,

“A more venomous tirade I never heard. It took us so by surprise we didn't know what to do.

I had heard Mr. Driver say some pretty harsh things before, but never anything so unchristian, so outrageous as this. Truly, I do not believe the man is in his right mind. In many respects Mr. Driver is a good man. But to-night he couldn't have acted worse if he had been possessed of the devil."

"Who knows but that he was?" suggested Miss Terry, whose religious ideas were strictly of the modern type. "You know, mother, some people still believe in demoniacal possession as mentioned in the New Testament."

"I more than half believe in it myself," said Mrs. Terry. "My daughter and I do not agree on many of these questions," she added. "But truly it would be a relief to believe that Mr. Driver was possessed. His eyes emitted sparks. I never saw a human being so fierce."

"No, it's out of the question, Dominie, for you to think of preaching on Sunday," said Mr. Strong, who with several others had stopped at the pastor's home on their way from the church. "You and Mrs. Baldwin must go away for a few days and try to get this miserable affair out of your minds. If you don't you will be sick, both of you. We'll see to the services."

Mrs. Terry and Mrs. Wood heartily seconded Mr. Strong's suggestion.

For an hour they sat and discussed the situation.

"Well, let us say no more about that meeting.

It seems like a horrid nightmare, too awful to be true," said Mrs. Strong. "The best thing we can do is to dismiss it from our minds—if we can. The avalanche has struck us: we must repair the damages as far as possible."

"Yes, as far as possible. But some damages are irreparable," observed Mrs. Terry.

"I wonder how you could sit there and endure it as you did!" exclaimed Mrs. Strong addressing her pastor, forgetful of the advice she had just given.

"Indeed, I am surprised at it myself, now that I look back on it," replied Mr. Baldwin. "While Mr. Driver was talking, it seemed to me as if he were berating some one else, yet all the time I knew that I was the one. But how I managed to sit still under it all, is more than I can understand."

"Why didn't some of you men get up and stop him?" asked Mrs. Wood.

"We'll take a constable with us to prayer-meeting after this," said Miss Appleton.

"I for one don't feel very much like going to prayer-meeting again very soon," said Miss Fenwick.

With an unexpected leave of absence thrust upon them, the next question was—where should they spend it? It was finally decided to call up the Hiltons by long distance 'phone.

"Yes, we're home and will be delighted to see

you. By all means come if you can get away," came back over the wire.

"Well, that's settled. We'll take the nine o'clock train in the morning."

The Hiltons had visited them during the holidays. Tom Hilton and Baldwin had known each other intimately in the Divinity School; but like many other such friendships theirs would doubtless have languished and perhaps finally died, had it not been for the fortunate circumstance that Tom Hilton had married one of Miriam's intimate Vassar friends. He was now pastor of an important church in Madison.

Hilton was a little older than Baldwin, a very brilliant man, known in his student days as a warm champion of the newer thought; a man of large soul and endowed with a keen sense of humor—just the kind of a man to make one forget, when to forget is the imperative duty.

He was at the station as their train pulled in. His welcome was characteristic.

"I am mighty glad you could come," said he. "The fishing season has just opened, and I'm in sad need of some one to do the rowing while I pull 'em in. Say, but you won't mind rowing all the time, will you?"

Taking the street car they rode up past the capitol square and down on the other side to within a block of the parsonage. Mrs. Tom, as her husband fondly called his wife, welcomed Miriam with open arms.

"It was so nice of you to think of us. We shall have such a good visit—there are so many things for us to talk about." As if this was something unusual between two members of her sex, especially when they had been in college together! But even though it were unusual, the present occasion more than fully justified the remark of Miriam's friend, since both were approaching the high and holy experience of desired motherhood.

On Saturday morning while the men were out on Third Lake fishing, Mrs. Tom took Miriam into her own room; and opening a drawer in the lower part of her dresser, she proceeded to exhibit certain dainty little garments for Miriam's inspection, with all the joy and pride of her happy heart.

Meanwhile Tom and David, though their friendship was in its way as intimate as the friendship between their wives, said nothing whatever to each other concerning the great event in question. Did it mean nothing to them? Far from it. It was one of their most constant subjects for thought; but being men, they did not discuss it between themselves.

"I ought to insist on your preaching both morning and evening," said Tom, reeling in his line, the boat being anchored near a patch of reeds at the upper end of the lake. "I fancy I'll get that fellow this time," and away his line flew off to the right of the bunch of reeds. It struck the water and sank a few feet. Tom reeled slowly, his eyes fixed on a certain spot, his body

held in instant readiness to obey when the signal came traveling up to his hands. An instant he waited; an instant more. The current carried the line a little farther out. Would that big fellow never take the hook? Tom knew he was there. Again the line was cast in exactly the same spot. It floated off as before and Tom began to reel it in. The fish was sulky, and would not bite.

"I'll try the other side," thought Tom. He began to reel in the line when a quick jerk told him that the big bass had changed his mind also.

"Watch him, Baldwin! Watch him! He races like a mustang!"

Tom let him have plenty of line, so long as the pull was strong; but the instant the strain eased up, he held his captive well in check, taking in the line or paying it out as was necessary. Several minutes elapsed. Tom let the fish take its own time in getting thoroughly tired; he was then able to lead him with little difficulty.

"That makes seven," said he, safely landing the bass. "Aren't they beauties! Yes, I'll let you off this time with only the morning service. My congregation, you know, doesn't often get the chance of hearing a good sermon. Two in one day, I fear, might prove too much of a good thing."

"I agree with you," said Baldwin; "especially since I wish to hear you preach."

So Baldwin preached in the morning and Hil-

ton in the evening. When their lunch after the evening service was finished, the ladies withdrew, leaving the two men alone. They sat for an hour and talked of old times.

"Tom, there's one thing I want to ask you," said Baldwin, turning somewhat abruptly from the topic they were discussing.

"All right; fire away, old man, only don't make your question too hard." Hilton looked at his friend rather curiously.

"Well, it's this—and you needn't answer it unless you have a mind to—but I would like to know, Hilton, how it is that a man holding the views you do, can preach the sermon you preached this evening?"

Hilton slid down in his easy-chair, crossed one foot over the other, pursed his lips, and from eyes half shut looked steadily for a moment into the serious face of his friend. Baldwin's question probed deeper than it was intended it should. While the sermon Hilton had preached that evening was a well prepared discourse, delivered with grace and energy, the conceptions of life and of the religious experience which it contained were conceptions which in their student days both men had found impossible to retain, in view of the teachings of modern psychology.

"Your question, old man," began Hilton, at last, speaking very slowly, "is one I wouldn't care to answer before a houseful—you understand. But *inter nos* it's different. I don't mind telling

you, frankly, since you have asked me the question, that my reasons for preaching that kind of a sermon have just gone up to bed."

"You mean ——" hesitated Baldwin.

"Yes; I mean my wife and the prospective little one."

Neither of the men spoke for a moment.

"I beg your pardon, Tom, old man; I shouldn't have asked so personal a question," said Baldwin finally.

"Oh, that's all right, Baldwin. Don't think of it for an instant. I'm sure there's no need of secrets between us. But it does cut a little to face the issue squarely. The fact is, the martyr-stuff is not over-abundant in my make up. I have a good church here and want to stay; I have a family to support; the ruling element in my church is very conservative; and—well—the truth of the matter is, Baldwin, between you and me I am not preaching just the kind of sermons I'd like to preach. The conceptions of life that are dearest to me, I don't put into my sermons. Why? Because I have a family to support. And God only knows how this fact bears down upon a man sometimes!"

Baldwin knit his brow. Here was food for thought.

"And mine is no solitary instance, I can assure you," continued Hilton; "though, of course, that's nothing really in my favor. In nearly all of the denominations the younger ministers are having

to meet the same situation. Some are solving it in one way, and some in another."

"Yes, this transition from the old to the new is not confined to any community or church. It's taking place everywhere that men and women are being awakened to think for themselves; and to my mind this revolution in religious thinking is a greater one than was the Reformation in Luther's time."

"I think so too," answered Hilton. "Do you know, Baldwin," he went on, "if I had my time to go over again, I should not marry, or else I should give up the ministry—one or the other. No man loves his family more than I do, God knows, and no man is more lost without a home of his own; yet if I had it to do over again, I should remain single. For a minister to have a free hand in helping on this movement, he should have either no family or an independent income. That is the way I feel about it. With a family depending on him, a man is not free to preach the message that burns in his own soul, when to do so endangers his support."

"In my case, however," rejoined David, "the church stipulated as one of the conditions in my call, that I should get married before beginning my work. And I am glad they did. For my part I haven't come to feel just as you do; but, of course, each one must solve these problems in his own way. We have our problems at Tioga, I can assure you; the fact is—but I have promised

Miriam that I would not get to discussing the situation at Tioga at all. We had an explosion at our midweek service last week—but I must not say another word about it. By the way, have you had any wedding experiences that come up to my ‘beeswax fee’?”

“I’ve had two interesting cases since the holidays but I do not think they quite equal that experience you were telling me about. I’ve laughed over that a half-dozen times.”

“What were yours like?” asked Baldwin settling himself to hear Hilton’s story.

“Well, the first one,” began Hilton with a zest characteristic of clergymen when they are exchanging stories, “the first one was quite a swell affair, the bride being a wealthy spinster, a typical old maid but with money enough to support several ordinary families. The groom I had never seen before nor since. He was a man past middle life, dressed in the height of fashion and of very imposing appearance,—a man with a million couldn’t have cut a wider swath.

“Well, after I had performed the marriage, the groom himself very graciously handed me an envelope, accompanying the act with unbounded dignity. I carefully tucked the precious envelope into one of my deepest pockets. It was, of course, some time before I got the opportunity to open the envelope; and when I did so, its contents, neatly folded, slipped out into my hand. My surprise couldn’t have been greater.”

"How much was it?" asked Baldwin.

"I stared at it for a moment, unable to believe my eyes. The envelope contained, instead of a fee, an advertisement for corns and bunions! The man was a fake. The woman came back without him, after a few weeks."

"That was one on you," laughed Baldwin. "You will be tempted to make them pay in advance, after this. But what was your other experience like?"

"Oh, the other one wasn't funny. It was simply a mistake, yet it was laughable, too. It came out all right in the end, however, and that was the best of it.

"We'd had a nice church wedding, and the best man handed me a neat little parcel done up in tissue paper. It looked about the size of one or two bills folded together very compactly. When I opened the package I knew that some one had made a mistake, but I didn't say anything.

"A few weeks later when the bridal party returned from Europe, the young man who had handed me the package came to me and said that he hoped I would pardon his blunder and gave me another little package quite similar in appearance to the one he had given on the day of the wedding.

"Do you wish the other one back?" I asked.

"I hardly think it would be worth while," he answered laughing. "Tobacco is too cheap."

"Tobacco?" said Baldwin.

"Yes. The first package contained a nice little wad of chewing tobacco. The fellow was so grateful to me for keeping the matter quiet that, out of pure gratitude, he went and got married himself so that I might have another fee."

"Very probably," laughed Baldwin. "Let me see,—yes it was since I saw you last that I had a very peculiar case in the way of a marriage. A man came to me and wanted to know if I would marry him and his wife over again."

"Marry them over again? Had they parted?"

"No. They were living together happily as they had been doing for twelve or fourteen years. There were several children in the family and the man was a steady, industrious fellow employed in the iron foundry. I knew the family quite well.

"'Why do you wish to be married again?' I asked.

"'Well, it's this way,' said he, showing no little embarrassment and confusion, 'when the minister married us, we didn't get no certificate, an' we haven't anything to show that we ever were really married. You see our children are now growin' up and Kate and me felt kinder uneasy on their account, an' we thought p'raps it would be safer to get married now—I mean over again. It would be safer in case anything should ever happen.'

"I asked him a number of questions and from his replies I became convinced that he had never been married at all. I hardly knew what to do. What would you have done?' "

"I would have married them, of course. Didn't you?"

"Yes. I thought it best not to make any investigation. I took the case as he represented it and married them over again."

"It was strange that they didn't ask you to date their certificate back to the time when they began living together," said Hilton.

"They did ask it. But of course I couldn't do it. I never have done such a thing and I never will."

"It is sometimes exceedingly hard to refuse, though. I had such a case last year. The young man all but got down on his knees to me. I knew him well, too; but I told him that was one thing I could not do, misdate a marriage certificate. I tell you what, Baldwin, a preacher has lots of opportunity for making a first-hand study of human nature. He meets people intimately and under all kinds of conditions and circumstances. Human nature is a pretty big subject, too, isn't it? I feel that I am only on the ragged edge of it and in the primer class at that; but I am learning some lessons which I hope never to forget. One of them is this: I am convinced that in cases of wrongdoing, if we could only know the circumstances more fully, we would be more lenient and merciful in our judgments. The great sin of the world, to my mind, is neither drunkenness, nor immorality, nor dishonesty, nor any of the vices for the committal of which society places a stigma upon its

members. The great sin of humanity is something quite different and, in my humble judgment, does more harm in every community than all of these I have named put together.

"No," he continued as they rose to retire; "I will not tell you the name of what I have in mind. But think it out for yourself. I am quite sure you will agree with me. Good-night, old man, and pleasant dreams."

XX

“**W**HAT is your subject this morning, dear?”

The Baldwins were starting for church. On the previous day they had returned to Tioga from their visit with the Hiltons, greatly benefited by their week's relaxation. All too short had been the days for Miriam and her dear friend Mrs. Tom—so many topics were there for these two women to discuss, so many questions each had to ask the other. In Mrs. Tom, Miriam found all that her heart had been hungering for—some one with whom she could share her great happiness.

The trip had done David good, also. He had looked at his work from a distance—a very needful thing for any one to do now and then; for nearness is apt to destroy one's sense of perspective. In coming back to his work he determined to be more moderate, more conciliatory, if possible; he could understand that it was difficult for some of the older members of his congregation to adjust themselves to new ideas and to modern methods, having been all their lives accustomed to those they had inherited; doubtless he had advanced more innovations than he had been aware, even though he had studiously endeavored to be moderate, so completely a part of his life were the newer thoughts and ways.

In keeping with this determination he decided to drop the responses and other changes he had introduced in the morning service, to drop them not because of Mr. Driver's threat, but because he was a minister of peace and it was sometimes a higher virtue to yield than to contend. Further, in selecting topics for his sermons he would try to pick out themes containing a large element of common ground, common to both the older and the newer thought; themes on which he could express himself freely without disturbing his conservative hearers.

"I shall speak this morning on missions," he replied to his wife's question. "A long time ago some of the ladies asked me to preach a sermon on missions, but I kept putting it off, and now I am glad I did. The subject will come in all right just at this time."

"Yes, missions ought to be a safe subject for any one to speak on in almost any church. While it is doubtless best, dear, for you to be as moderate as you can be, I wouldn't for the world have you adopt Tom Hilton's policy of suppressing the newer thought altogether."

"I think you need have no fears along that line," laughed David. "I couldn't suppress it if I tried. It's too large a part of my life. I shall make a desperate effort, however, to be very moderate, to emphasize the points we hold in common, as strongly as I can. But what a delightful morning this is!"

"Yes ; it's the first Sunday in May. The miracle of returning life is in evidence everywhere."

"See those buds ! Those trees will soon be covered with leaves. When I was a boy we always planted corn when the maples began to leaf out."

"Why was that ?"

"It was thought that all danger of frost was then past. But I mustn't talk any more now or my opening prayer will suffer for it."

With joyous step these two worshipers joined the stream of people on their way up town to the various churches.

On the moment that the organ voluntary began, Baldwin entered his pulpit. The service was conducted without response or chant, with all the severe simplicity of the old-time New England meeting house. By the close of the opening exercises, two or three of the older brethren, whose names are not to be mentioned in this narrative, settled themselves down into the most comfortable position possible, closed their eyes and were soon, to all intents and purposes, enjoying their usual morning—worship ; I had almost used another word.

In front of the speaker, nor far from the middle of the church, sat Dr. and Mrs. James ; behind them, on the left, were the Ellwoods ; in the rear half of the central block of seats were a number of university students. On one side of the church sat Mr. Brand and his wife ; on the other side, Mr. Driver and his family. The church was well filled and many strange faces were in the audience.

Sermons in books are not often interesting reading. Too often they fail to hold the attention even when reinforced by the preacher's voice and personality. But Baldwin's audience gave him excellent attention. It is highly probable, however, that very few of his hearers could have told on the next day much about the sermon, had it not been for what happened immediately at its close, while the preacher was opening his hymn-book to announce the number of the closing hymn. What happened set a hundred tongues to discussing the discourse for many days to come.

And the thing that happened was this: Mr. Brand quickly rose from his seat, stood in the aisle by his pew, and without addressing the pastor, began to speak. His words came as a shock—a proverbial thunderbolt out of a clear sky.

"We have been hearing strange things this morning, brothers; strange doctrines to come from the pulpit of a church of *our* denomination!"

The effect was electrical. The preacher paused with hymn-book half open; instantly half of the congregation turned in their seats, while the rest leaned forward with eyes in Brand's direction. All held their breath in the intenseness of their expectation. What would he say? What was he going to do? What strange things have they been listening to, unsuspectingly? Miriam sat where she could not see Mr. Brand without turning, and she did not move in her seat; but she instantly recognized his voice, and the color left her

cheek. A strange apprehension seized her as she clutched the arm of the seat, awaiting she knew not what. A tightness settled about her heart and she began to feel faint for the first time in her life.

"I repeat that we have been hearing strange doctrines this morning, very strange indeed to come from the pulpit of this church," said Mr. Brand, still holding every one in suspense. "If what our pastor says be true, then I for one,—and I am persuaded that there are many others in this audience,—have been studying the Bible in the bondage of error, lo these many years. For our pastor tells us one thing and our Bible, as we have studied it, tells us another. But it may be that our pastor's Bible is not like ours. I have more than once thought that his Bible must be a different kind from mine."

Miriam grasped her seat tighter and tighter as these words sounded in her ears; the feeling of suffocation was almost overpowering her, as Mr. Brand went on.

"*My* Bible teaches very plainly that without Christ the heathen will be cast into eternal perdition, punishment everlasting and without end. But our pastor has just told us that the present missionary motive is not to rescue the heathen from eternal punishment; he tells that though the earlier missionary motive was undoubtedly to rescue the heathen from such punishment, that now in the light of our modern conceptions of God—I believe I am using his exact words—the Christian

world is finding it impossible to continue holding that belief.

“Brethren, it is such teaching as this that is sapping the very life of missionary effort *in some of the other denominations*. I for one protest against its introduction into our denomination. We stand with both feet on the Word of God. We acknowledge no other authority. For us there *is* no other authority than the Bible. In the inspired Word, which I accept from cover to cover, God has revealed his holy will once for all time. But our pastor does not quote the Bible as the authority for his statement. His authority is of an entirely different kind—‘in the light of our modern conceptions of Deity’—I believe he used the word ‘deity.’

“Brethren, in my humble judgment, the time has fully come when we should decide whether this church is to remain true to the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God, or not. For one, and I speak for others, it is exceedingly painful for me to have to listen, Sunday after Sunday, to the proclamation of doctrines not only not biblical, but calculated to undermine the very foundations of our denominational existence.”

David Baldwin stood behind his pulpit as one paralyzed, speechless. The audience, amazed, nonplussed, held its breath, as one man. Miriam was nerving herself with all the command of will she could summon, to keep possession of her senses. If only she could get up and go out; but

she did not dare trust herself to make the effort—she felt so faint and dizzy. Oh, if only Mr. Brand would stop talking !

But Mr. Brand was speaking rapidly and had no thought of stopping yet. Too long, far too long had the pent up force of this outbreak been gathering.

“To many of you,” he continued, including the audience with a gesture, “not having been trained by special study in the beliefs of the denomination, the danger I have indicated may not be apparent. But, brethren, as most of you know, I spent three years in studying theology and I *know* whereof I speak. I have prayed to be delivered from this unpleasant and painful duty ; but if I should keep still any longer I should feel recreant both to my God and to my conscience, and would no longer be able to look my brethren in the face. Knowledge brings with it responsibilities and imperative duties. I have sometimes even wished that I did not possess this knowledge of sacred things ; at this moment I would gladly have it laid upon the shoulders of any of my brethren, feeling certain that it would compel him to arise in this church service and defend the doctrines we cherish so dearly, doctrines delivered to us as a priceless heritage, made doubly sacred by the multitude of men and women who have willingly endured imprisonment, nameless tortures, and even the stake, rather than be faithless to these beliefs, leaving us a noble example.

"Now, brethren, it is *our* turn. Shall we prove ourselves worthy of the high task committed to our care? Shall we hand down to succeeding generations these beliefs and practices as pure and undefiled as when we received them? I know the answer that lies in your hearts, friends, neighbors, members of this church; I know your loyalty to truth; I know your love for the good old beliefs of your fathers and mothers; I know it is needed only to bring this subject to your attention in order for you to see your plain, your unmistakable duty. You are resolved, I know I read your hearts aright, you are resolved,—let other denominations follow after the uninspired teachings of modern thought if they will,—you are resolved to demand that the preaching in this church shall no longer be antagonistic to the beliefs and practices we dearly cherish; that our pastor be requested either to conform to ——"

"Stop! Not another word! Not another word more, or I'll pitch you headlong out of that door!" interrupted Professor Strong facing Mr. Brand with a look which plainly indicated he meant all he said and more. "Sit down! I say, sit down! Can't you see that you have already killed the pastor's wife?"

Brand, silenced, sat down.

Miriam had fainted. David, leaping from the pulpit platform, was at her side in an instant. Dr. Wood arose and hurried to Baldwin's assistance.

The audience, not having been dismissed, and held by the habit of awaiting the benediction, remained seated. Mr. Strong stepped to the front.

"We are dismissed," said he. "Please pass out as quietly and quickly as possible. Mrs. Baldwin is ill—no one knows how seriously. Wait! There will be no further services in this church to-day. That is all. We are dismissed."

With soft tread and hushed voices the people passed quietly out of the auditorium, many lingering a moment at the doors to cast a backward glance at the little group about the pastor's wife. The physician's face was very grave. This stopping of the action of the heart might mean, in her case, something far more serious than ordinarily.

Strong had a carriage at the door within a few minutes. Tenderly David and the doctor and Mr. Strong carried the unconscious woman to her home, taking her thus from the church service to which she had set out so joyously two hours before. What an unexpected experience the hours had brought her!

All that day and all that night David Baldwin was at Miriam's bedside. A trained nurse was summoned and the physician was present a large part of the time. As the dawn was breaking over the eastern horizon, a double sorrow was meted out to this anxious, watching husband: he gazed upon the face of his first-born son, but it was the face of a child born dead. His heart seemed torn asunder as this sad fact beat in upon his slow powers of

comprehension. His child dead ! Impossible ! He could not believe it. But the cruel fact was as obstinate as it was cruel. The child to whose coming he and Miriam had looked forward so fondly, so expectantly, who seemed to them already the third member of their little family—this child was dead—born a corpse !

And the other sorrow was even greater, if possible, than the first : but the full meaning of it was not borne in on his confused mind till later—only little by little and after hours and days of hoping against hope, did he comprehend the bitterness of the cup placed to his unwilling lips—the powers of Miriam's mind were dethroned, her reason had fled !

Crushed and broken-hearted, David Baldwin refused to be comforted ; for his anguish of heart was great.

" Oh, the mystery of human suffering ! " he cried. " Who can solve it ? Who can add a ray of light to its meaning ? Not one step in human progress can be taken but that some one must suffer. Not one new idea can make its way into human thought except some one must pave its way by suffering. What, oh, what can be the meaning of it all ? "

Such were some of the thoughts surging through David Baldwin's mind. He was unconsciously echoing a cry never very far from the human heart since man began to think on the great experiences of his existence.

XXI

THE hands of the little clock on David Baldwin's study desk were nearing the midnight hour, yet he was still sitting there, a sheet of paper, finely written, in his hand. On his face were traces of the inner conflict in whose midst he was still held after a whole evening's struggle.

The six interminable weeks of Miriam's mental derangement had grown deep lines on David's face and sprinkled his temples generously with gray ; but those weeks, thank God ! were past and for the space of a month she had been slowly regaining her strength both of mind and body. Her first question, as her mind was clearing, was to see her baby—she did not know it was dead.

"Is the baby all right?" she asked. "I hope it is a boy ; David so wanted a boy." Her eyes searched the nurse's face.

"Yes, dear Mrs. Baldwin, your baby is a boy," answered the nurse.

"Oh, I am so glad."

"You are not at all strong yet and you must not talk any more now," added the nurse.

"But you will let me have just one look at him, nurse, just one look at my dear, dear baby, won't you, before I go to sleep again?"

"Dear Mrs. Baldwin, I would like to bring him to you but he ought not to be disturbed just now."

"Of course. If he's asleep I can wait."

On the next day, however, the cruel words had to be spoken.

"It's a boy, David ; aren't you glad?" Miriam said looking into the eyes of her husband, her mind quite clear again. "But I haven't seen him. You will show him to me, won't you, dear?"

For an answer David stooped and kissed her cheek. A tear escaped him and fell upon her forehead. Miriam's eyes searched his own.

"Why don't you speak, dear ; is anything the matter? Isn't the baby all right? Is he deformed? Is *that* why no one will show him to me? Why, David, I'll love him just the same. I'll love him even more. 'Please let me see him if only for one little minute,' she pleaded.

"Miriam, dearest sweetheart, our baby is not deformed."

"Oh, I am so thankful." The anxious look faded away. "Now you will bring the dear little fellow to his mother who loves him so? Bless his heart, he must be getting hungry."

"Miriam, dearest, I cannot bring him to you."

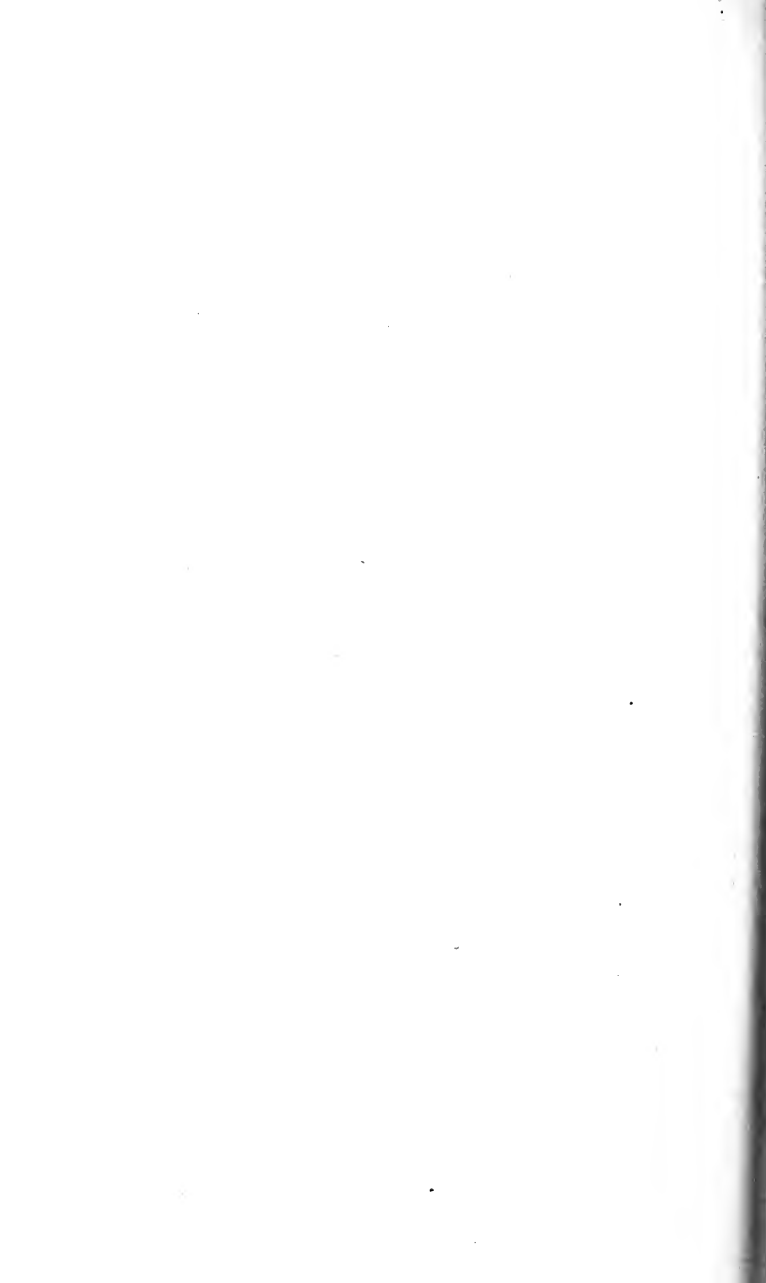
"Why?" she cried.

David buried his face in his hands, unable to speak, the great lump in his throat making utterance impossible.

"David, dear, I know what you would say to



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me: our baby is dead?" Though she meant it for a statement, the question was in her voice.

David managed to say, "Yes ——"

"Dead? My God! My baby dead!" A merciful unconsciousness stole over her, robbing the hour of further anguish.

The direful consequences following Mr. Brand's outbreak at church that Sunday morning had brought down upon him such severe criticism that he was forced to take refuge in silence and inaction. Among others, Mrs. Strong and Mrs. Wood called on him and begged that he cease his opposition to their pastor's work.

"You older members have had your day!" exclaimed Mrs. Strong, as they were taking their leave. "Why attempt to mould the religious life of the younger generation after the pattern of a former one? There are any number of the younger people who are hungering for just the kind of preaching our pastor has been giving us. Why not let us have it?"

"Yes," continued Mrs. Wood, "it is only natural for Mr. Baldwin to be in sympathy with the newer thought, since he is a young man, educated thirty years after you were, and during this time great advances have been made along all lines of thought. Mr. Baldwin's preaching has been very helpful to me, Mr. Brand. But you and Mr. Driver are making it very hard for him."

"Think how that poor woman has suffered, too!" added Mrs. Strong. "How can you men

continue your persecutions with all of that on your consciences! Dear Brother Brand, you will not oppose Mr. Baldwin any further, will you?"

"See how the congregations are building up!" continued Mrs. Wood. "Dr. James comes every Sunday. He told me the other day that he was very much pleased with Mr. Baldwin's sermons. That should count for a great deal, I think. Dr. James is one of the best educated men in the city."

"But education doesn't make him sound in his religious thinking!" exclaimed Brand impatiently. "Do not think," he went on reverting to the former topic, "that I have not suffered enough over this matter already. God knows I have! But can I sit still, I who know what the denomination stands for, while our beliefs are undermined in the very pulpit set for their defense? I assure you, if Mr. Baldwin will preach the doctrines of the denomination, no one could be a more zealous supporter of him than I would most gladly become."

Thus the interview ended.

"Why can't he see that the world has grown away from him!" exclaimed Mrs. Strong while they were waiting on the corner for a car. "He is just where he was thirty years ago."

It soon became evident to Mr. Brand that Baldwin was growing on the community more rapidly than ever, gathering about him a strong following which might become dangerous any day to his own long established position of leadership. The

summer vacation would soon end and the students would be back. Baldwin would then be more popular than ever. If anything was ever going to be done, it should be done at once.

Mr. Brand had a talk with Deacon Long. It was soon the deacon's opinion also that something should be done.

"Hadn't we better talk this over with Driver before we formulate any definite plans?" asked the deacon.

"But Driver is usually so obstinate; he nearly always opposes what the rest of us want."

"I know it. As I was saying to my wife not long ago, he was born that way—it's a part of our fallen depravity. We shouldn't be too hard on him. He can't help it. And if we don't get him on our side at the start, he will surely be opposed to everything we try to do."

"I believe there's something in what you say, deacon."

"Oh, I know Driver like a book. I never have any trouble with him."

"Come to think about it, deacon, I guess that's so. How do you manage it?"

"Oh, I learned how to get along with Driver years and years ago, soon after I joined the church. I found out that the only way to keep him from opposing what I wanted done was to get him in it at the very start, and get him to thinking it was all right. But if I couldn't get Driver to thinking the plan was his'n, I've learned that the best thing

to do is to give it up—yes, sir, every time. Oh, I can get along with Driver ; I never have any difficulty with him. It's you and him that upset the church so often."

"But he is so obstinate ! And you know, deacon, you're always on my side."

"Of course he's obstinate. Most people are. That's why they have to be managed. As I was saying to my wife, the reason why any two people don't get along, nine times out of ten, is because both of them want their own way. This holds in church work and in matrimony and I guess in other things, too. Now if we manage Driver just right, he'll join us ; if we don't, he'll oppose us as certain as his name is Amos Driver."

"I declare, deacon, you have given me some pointers. Of course I've always known that if there was a man in the church who could get Driver to do a thing, you were that man ; but I never stopped to ask the reason for it. Something must be done soon. Our church will be completely swamped if we don't. These new doctrines will destroy any church unless they are checked. Just look at the First Church in St. Thomas ; everybody knows what the heresies of modern thought have done for that church. While claiming to be a regular church of the denomination the members are wholly given over to this damnable new theology ! Why, they hold scarcely one of the distinctive beliefs of the denomination. And if we don't bring matters to a climax here before another

year rolls by, we will be in practically the same fix : those of us who are loyal to the truth will have to step down and out or keep still."

"Yes, as I was saying to my ——" began Deacon Long, but Brand interrupted him, saying that he must be going. Before leaving, it was agreed that they should call on Driver that evening.

"I suspect you have come to see me rather than the rest of my family," said Driver, conducting them into the library which he used both as a den and an office. "The young people have some sort of a gathering here to-night ; but we won't be disturbed in here. Have a cigar, deacon ; Brand I know doesn't smoke. What ! you don't smoke either, Deacon Long ? Well ! well !" For forty years Driver had been offering the deacon cigars and professing astonishment when they were refused.

With more skill on the part of the deacon than Brand had ever given him credit for possessing, Driver was led to join them in writing a letter to their pastor.

"Yet I tell you I have little heart for this business. Gad ! as if I haven't already suffered all that my seventy years can stand !"

"Certainly you have. And so have we all. We've all suffered. And why ? Because our pastor will not conform to the usages and customs of the denomination. He is to blame. As I was saying to my wife—he has brought this upon us

and upon himself. If only he would preach sound doctrines——”

“I tell you I find no fault with his preaching!” interrupted Driver savagely. “If he would only conform to the usages of this church, and of the denomination, I’d find no fault whatever with him.”

“But he don’t conform to the denominational practices. Remember that ritual!” urged the deacon.

“But with his wife in the condition she is, I have little heart for writing this letter. We should go very careful. God knows I don’t want to cause that woman any further suffering.”

“Of course, we would all be glad if nothing further had to be done,” added Brand in his suavest tone. “I for one would give a neat little sum any day if I could wash my hands of the whole affair. But can we do it? As members of this church, can we do it?”

“In conducting the services, Mr. Baldwin has evaded the issue we raised some time ago,” added the deacon. “He does not conform to the established customs of the church; he does not preach sound doctrines; he——”

“I repeat, deacon, I find no fault with Mr. Baldwin’s doctrines!” roared Driver, getting up and walking impatiently about the room. The other two men wisely sat still. “The central thing of any organization is its customs, its practices. These, being handed down from age

to age become hallowed with sacred memories, become dear to us like the portraits of our ancestors. I cherish these customs and practices of the church in which I was reared. What dear associations cling to them! They bind me to the past. It's sacrilege to smash such precious heirlooms."

"But that's just what Mr. Baldwin set out to do when he began using that ritual!"

"I know it, deacon. And if I hadn't entered a protest, robes and candles and incense would have doubtless followed by this time."

"We are all indebted to you; as I was saying to my ——"

"If there is anything under God's heavens I do detest," said Driver, sitting down at his desk again, "it is a surpliced minister. It's nonsense! I'm hostile to it!"

"But we came pretty near having one in our own church. The rest of us look to you to take the lead in such matters. And this letter will be right along that line. It may save us from further trouble, from other innovations that might be introduced at any moment, if we don't write this letter."

"Well," said Driver taking up his pen again, "if I thought we could keep Mr. Baldwin from making further transgressions on the customs of this church, I'm ready to join in writing him a note. But I still insist that we must be careful."

"Yes, we must be careful," repeated the deacon. "We all agree to that."

"And we must not put anything in the letter calculated to disturb or upset him."

"Certainly, nothing calculated to upset him."

"For I will not be a party to the doing of anything that's going to bring any more suffering to that poor woman. Understand?"

"Of course. None of us would think for a moment of doing such a thing."

Driver glared fiercely at the two men sitting near him.

"I have little heart for this matter," said he, dipping his pen again in the ink. He sat looking intently at the sheet of paper before him; but he wrote no word. Brand remained seated. The deacon arose and stood near the back of Driver's chair. Brand wisely kept silent. The wrong word at this moment would spoil everything. Driver placed a blotter under his hand, but the pen was held above the paper. Anxiety was written all over the deacon's face. His hands worked nervously, rubbing one over the other.

"As I was saying to my wife," began Deacon Long, "the doctrines of the denomination are no longer being preached from our pulpit. Why, I have in my note-book here page after page of our pastor's unsound utterances; but——"

"Unsound—your grandmother! I tell you I find no fault with his doctrines," snapped Driver savagely.

"Of course," assented Deacon Long. "As I was going on to say—his unsound utterances are bad enough, but we could stand them if that was all. But it ain't. He does worse than merely preaching unsound doctrine, as I was saying to my wife just yesterday. He could be endured if he did nothing but that; but he goes further—we all know he goes further. And where would our church be to-day if he hadn't been checked? Candles and incense, as Brother Driver has said, would soon have followed that liturgy."

"And a surplice," added Brand.

"Yes, and a surplice," repeated Deacon Long. "Who knows what changes he'll introduce next? I for one can't stand any more changes. They upset me," watching closely the side of Driver's face. "No man of our age can stand them."

Driver dipped his pen in the ink again.

"A few words from us just now may save trouble later; and of course none of us want any more trouble—we have all suffered enough, God knows," repeated the deacon, rubbing his hands.

"If I could know it wouldn't disturb that poor woman," said Driver, meditatively, as he rearranged the blotter under his hand.

"When I was a pastor," said Brand, quietly, "I frequently received letters that I never showed to my wife."

"It's a blamed pity, Brand, you are not a pastor somewhere now."

"Yes, I suppose it is."

"That poor woman wouldn't be where she is to-night if you ——"

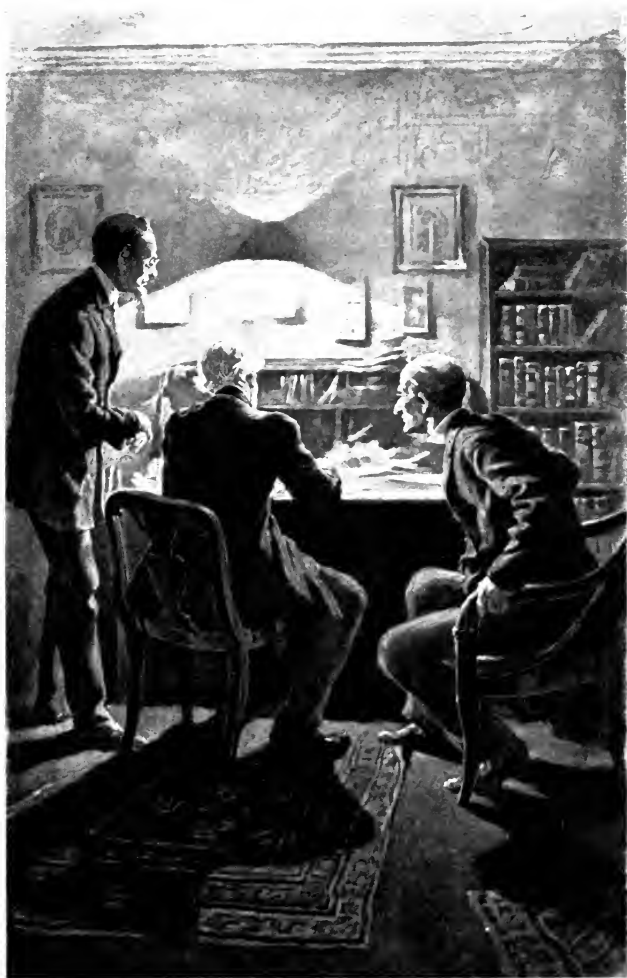
"I guess you had your share in it!" retorted Brand.

"Well, I guess I did," acknowledged Driver. "I guess we have all had our hand in it—even the deacon, here. Now one thing I'm hostile to: I will not be a party to bringing any more trouble to that sick woman. God Almighty knows I've suffered enough! And if a letter from us will do any good in keeping Mr. Baldwin as pastor of this church where he belongs ——"

"Of course it will do good," said the deacon, still unconsciously rubbing his hands as Driver dipped his pen into the ink-well again and began to write.

Deacon Long had developed a sportsman's relish in hunting out unsound spots in his pastor's theology. Every Sunday morning as he set out for church, armed with pencil and note-book, his mental attitude was scarcely that of a devout worshiper; rather it was that of a sportsman. Anything in his pastor's sermons dressed in unfamiliar garb, any truth delivered with new emphasis, or anything different from what he had been accustomed to hearing aroused the deacon not unlike the call of quail, the chatter of squirrels, and the drumming of partridge arouse other sportsmen after other game.

Now, as the deacon stood behind Driver's chair, watching the pen as it began to leave dark



traces on the white paper, his eyes glowed with keen satisfaction which was further expressed as he unconsciously rubbed one hand caressingly over the other. Surely he was stalking big game now!

Brand's thoughts were different. He was an intense religious partisan, strong willed, and exceedingly narrow, having no use for any one holding religious opinions different from his own. To him religion meant adherence to certain creedal statements. He tolerated other church organizations only because the spirit of the age compelled him to do so. Had he lived in the Middle Age he would have made a zealous inquisitor-general.

To Brand, his denomination was the bearer of the ark of the covenant in this new age; its doctrines were drawn from the pure Word of God. In the acceptance of these doctrines was salvation; without them—well, God's mercy was the only source of refuge for those Christians held in the bondage of error outside of his denominational fold. Doctrine was everything; character, nothing. A good character was a snare of the Evil One, if the person's beliefs were wrong.

With intense interest he, too, watched Driver's pen as it began to obey the writer's will, quietly exulting in the consciousness that these two men, Driver and the deacon as well, were carrying out his will rather than their own. He had sown the seeds of suspicion in the deacon's mind and was grimly pleased with the crop these suspicions

had produced. He had primed the deacon as together they had planned to get Driver to join in writing this letter to Mr. Baldwin. Silently, conscious of his power, Brand watched the man at the desk.

Brand cared little what words that pen was writing, so long as the letter served his purpose—which was to bring matters to a climax.

Sitting before his study desk on the following evening, David Baldwin was face to face with one of the gravest problems of a minister's life. The letter, honestly intended by the one who penned it, to contain nothing to disturb him, had in truth, as Brand knew it would, brought matters to a climax.

In the letter were expressed deep regrets for the sad experiences of the recent past; warm acknowledgment of the pastor's scholarship and ability; entire satisfaction with him and his work save in one respect.

"We write to assure you," the letter concluded, "of our most cordial and hearty support, if you will conform to the usages of the denomination and preach Scriptural doctrines, the beliefs commonly accepted in our denomination." The last clause was written in as a correction.

"As a minister of the denomination," the letter went on, "this should not be hard for you to do, nor do we think we are asking anything strange or unreasonable in making this request. Your

sermons and your conformity to the established customs of our church will be sufficient answer to this unofficial communication."

For hours David Baldwin faced this "unofficial communication," signed by Amos Driver, Sylvester Brand, and Jacob Long, without coming to any satisfactory conclusion. That these three men could control the situation, he had no doubt, unless he should mass his adherents against them, which would mean a church quarrel and the rending of the church from top to bottom.

"No, this must not be done," was his thought. "There must be no church fight. I must either conform to their demands and be permitted to stay; or I must decline to suppress the message that burns in my heart—and take the consequences."

The consequences? Ah, yes; why should he hesitate to take the consequences? His thoughts turned to Miriam lying helpless in her room, in need of constant care; he thought of his financial prospects, should he be forced to resign, of the unpaid obligations to physician and nurse, and his inability to meet these on demand; he thought, too, of the difficulty a churchless minister nearly always has in getting another location—that churches always seek men who are serving a church and look with suspicion on ministers without pastorates. He thought of men who had endured almost everything rather than resign before getting a call elsewhere.

In the midst of these meditations, Baldwin remembered the words of his jovial friend Hilton, "The reasons for that kind of a sermon have just gone up to bed." He had thought Hilton lacking in spirit, but now that the iron had entered his own soul, Baldwin felt that he had judged his friend harshly.

The little clock, whose hands were pointing to the hour of one, was ticking the minutes away regardless that a human soul was there struggling with one of the profoundest problems of its existence—whether it would be bound or free ; whether it would sink into the undifferentiated mass or maintain its individuality at any cost ; whether for bread it would render meaningless service, receiving a hireling's pay for a hireling's work, or, standing before God alone, perform the service for which it was born.

Twice David Baldwin decided to proclaim the message glowing in his own heart, let come what might. Twice thoughts of Miriam and of his financial condition caused him to reconsider the problem. Upon his knees he wrestled with the subject anew. If his decision touched only himself he could have settled it easily. But there was Miriam ! In her delicate condition could he do anything that would bring discomfort to her ? And these men had promised their support if he would but preach what they wanted to hear ! They had said that it ought not to be hard for him, a minister of the denomination, to conform to de-

nominal practices and to preach the beliefs of the Church.

"O God!" he cried. "What am I to do! The vision of truth thou hast granted unto me—how can I stand before thee and not bear witness to it? How can I preach and not give utterance to the message burning in my heart?"

Sobs escaped him as he buried his face in his hands.

"Thou knowest how joyfully I would bear witness to the heavenly vision, even to the yielding of life itself, if it touched me alone; but, O God, another life, dearer than mine—how can I bring further suffering to her? I cannot! O God, save me from this hour!"

His bowed frame shook with grief too deep for words.

"I cannot! I cannot bring further calamity upon Miriam," he repeated, after a moment. But the conflict still raged. "How can I suppress the message thou hast given me?" he cried.

"My God!" lifting his gaze upward, "I cannot decide unless thou help me. Oh, clarify my vision that I may see plainly—very plainly, dear heavenly Father, the path in which I should walk!"

In the intensity of his struggle, David Baldwin had been oblivious to the objects about him. In his upward gaze he did not see the ceiling of the room—it made no impression on his senses, so intent was he in his endeavor to realize the nearness of the divine presence. But directly in his line of

vision as he lowered his gaze was a picture of the Christ; it held him with a strangely fascinating power. As David Baldwin looked upon that kneeling figure, into his own soul came a feeling of kinship, born of fellowship in suffering. He remembered that the Christ, too, shrank from drinking his cup, shrank from the consequences of bearing witness to his own inner vision of truth.

A full moment Baldwin looked at the Gethsemane picture, scarcely breathing, as he drank in its silent message of sympathy. An unwonted peace crept in and possessed his soul, a peace which fortifies and strengthens men so strangely, so mysteriously in their hours of deepest need. Over his face spread something like a radiance. He, too, would follow the example of the Christ—would drink the cup placed before him.

XXII

THE last plate had been served and their Sunday dinner was getting well under way at the Stewart home. The usual silence prevailed. All were waiting for the little mother to give her customary signal. The morning sermon had provided an interesting topic for discussion, but not a word concerning the pastor's discourse had any member of the household uttered. The mother who could not attend church must hear what each one had to say.

"And what did the minister preach about this morning?"

Seven active brains and as many vocal organs were held in restraint while the father made his reply.

"He preached on temptation, mother, and a very good sermon it was."

There was silence for about a quarter of a minute.

"How did Mr. Baldwin treat his subject? Was he logical?"

"His points seemed well arranged, mother, very well arranged."

After having waited for their father to reply to the first two or three questions, as was their custom, then the flood-gate opened and the seven young people poured forth their observations on

the pastor's morning sermon. Only years of training could enable one to follow what each speaker was saying ; but Mrs. Stewart had had the training.

"But Mr. Baldwin's last point," observed Mary after several minutes of discussion had elapsed, "I didn't quite catch his meaning."

"About the Church leading her ministers into temptation?"

"Yes."

"Why, I thought he was very clear on that point. It was this way, mother," said Tom; "Mr. Baldwin said that the Church was offering a very subtle temptation to her ministers ——"

"The Church tempting her ministers?"

"Yes, tempting them to suppress their message ; he ——"

"Oh, he was very eloquent, mother !"

"You should have heard him ! He never before spoke with such earnestness."

"He said," continued Tom edging in his remark, "that it was only natural for a minister to desire to keep in sympathetic touch with the pillars of his church, and to do this he was sometimes tempted ——"

"——To preach what the people wanted to hear ——"

"——Rather than the message of his own heart."

"——That powerful motives were brought to bear upon a minister sometimes owing to his family ——"

—"Because he had no other support."

—"He told of a certain instance——"

—"Of a minister whose reasons had gone to bed," interposed Elizabeth.

The rest laughed.

"But he did say it," persisted Elizabeth. "I heard him."

"But what did he mean, dear?" asked Mrs. Stewart.

"Oh, I didn't understand just what he did mean. I never understand *all* that a minister says."

"I think it was this way, mother; this minister to whom Mr. Baldwin referred preached a sermon which did not represent his own views, and a former classmate visiting him asked why he did it."

—"Asked how he could preach that kind of a sermon."

—"Believing as he did."

—"And this minister replied that his reasons had just gone up to bed."

—"His wife and child, mother, you see, had just gone up-stairs to bed."

—"Having a family to support he was preaching what the pillars of his church demanded of him rather than the message of his own heart."

—"The pillars were conservative and insisted on the minister preaching the creed of a previous generation."

—"The minister was a man of modern ideas."

—"The Church tempted him."

—"The pillars showed themselves unfriendly to modern interpretations of life."

—"And to retain his pulpit he gave them the type of sermon which would permit him to remain their pastor."

—"Mr. Baldwin said that the situation was by no means an uncommon one—the Church tempting her younger ministers to repeat a message they had outgrown."

—"Indeed, mother, Mr. Baldwin was very eloquent this morning. He spoke with the earnestness, the impressiveness of a prophet."

—"Like an Isaiah or a Savonarola."

—"Indeed, mother, you missed a rare treat!"

—"But Savonarola wasn't a prophet, was he, mother?" objected Elizabeth. "He lived several centuries after Bible times."

—"Certainly, dear, he lived after Bible times, as you call it," answered Mrs. Stewart. "What Tom means is that any man in any age who proclaims a high imperious message, speaking in the name of the deity is a prophet. In this sense prophets are not confined to Bible times nor to the Hebrew people. Is this what you meant, Tom?"

"Yes, mother. And I'm so glad to find that Mr. Baldwin holds the same view. We were discussing the subject the other evening while out fishing. He said that one of the fundamental differences between the older and the newer re-

ligious thought was right here ; that the advocates of the new theology hold that God is in as close and as vital contact with humanity to-day as ever ; that to men of every age, qualified to interpret spiritual truths, there came visions of truth, messages from above, so possessing the recipients as to give them no rest until they spoke forth what was stirring in their own hearts. Mr. Baldwin says that when a man has accepted this conception of God's relationship to his world—that God is as near to mankind now as in the time of Abraham or Moses—all the other positions of the new theology will follow as a matter of course."

"I can't see what Mr. Baldwin means by the new theology," said Mary. "Mother, let me refill your cup. Of course God is in his world now as much as he ever was. Don't all people believe that? What is this new theology, Tom? I for one do not understand what you mean by 'modern religious thought.'"

"Let's ask Mr. Baldwin to give *us* private lessons also. Why should Tom be the only member of the Stewart family so highly favored?" said Cora.

"Just the thing! Let's invite him over some evening and the whole Stewart family can sit at his feet at the same time."

"A capital idea! There are few men with whom I find more pleasure and profit in private conversation than with Mr. Baldwin. But, mother, the children have strayed a little way from the

morning discourse. There was one other thought, mother, which struck me in a new light. Whether it be new theology or not I do not know. It was this: Mr. Baldwin said that Jesus himself had to meet this temptation—that he was tempted to suppress his message; that this is the meaning of the Gethsemane struggle. Should he bear witness to his larger, truer conceptions of life and truth and endure the consequences or should he suppress his message and conform to the dominant opinion of his day, thus saving himself from the heresy trial and its certain ignominious consequences which he knew would follow? This interpretation of the struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane was new to me."

"How does it fit in with your own thoughts, Ephraim?"

"I confess, mother, that I had no clear or well defined ideas on what Gethsemane really did mean. I suppose there lingered in my mind something of the traditional view—that Jesus was shrinking from the sacrifice which he was about to make for the sins of the world, the old Calvinistic view of Christ's sufferings being an equivalent for the punishment of the redeemed, or something of that sort. But I must say," continued Mr. Stewart, "that Mr. Baldwin's interpretation has given me something to think about."

"Indeed, all of his sermons do that."

"Mr. Baldwin is evidently probing some of the profound experiences of life," said Mrs. Stewart, as

Mary rose to bring on the dessert. "But, Ephraim, can a man speak as he did to-day without having gone into the depth of a similar conflict himself? My word for it, no man rises to such utterances and such insight save through experience."

"You don't mean, mother, that he has been tempted to suppress his message?"

"What else? Could Mr. Baldwin have preached that sermon in the way he did, otherwise?"

All eyes were fixed on Mrs. Stewart as she made this statement.

"You're right, mother. The more I think of it the more I am sure you're right. That sermon, no man could have preached it who had not himself been in Gethsemane!"

"What I'd like to know is—what part has Mr. Brand played in the affair?"

"But the discourse was wholly impersonal."

"Yes, not a word, not even an allusion to any experience of his own. Such a thought didn't even occur to me till mother suggested it."

"Nor to me either."

"Well, one thing is certain. We'll hear more of this. If Mr. Brand insists on hearing sermons loaded with medieval conceptions of life, let him preach them to himself. He's capable of producing such discourses. But for one, I'm not going to sit idly by and let him drive Mr. Baldwin from the pulpit of our church."

"Good for you, Tom!" cried Cora. "We need

a little variety in our business meetings. Driver and Brand have become monotonous. Surely Brand and Stewart would make an attractive combination. I predict a full house at the opening performance."

"And we'll stand by you, Tom ; all we need is a leader," said Robert. "Mr. Brand has considerable influence in the church. But there's no sense in his dictating what Mr. Baldwin shall preach."

"But of course we don't know with certainty whether he has interfered or not."

"I wish I was as certain of a million."

"Well, what can we do? Tom, you've been appointed captain or general, whichever you wish. The campaign is in your hands."

"I've been thinking," responded Tom, as they rose from the table, "I've been thinking for some time about a Monday evening class for young people, so that Mr. Baldwin might come into closer contact with more of the young men and women of our congregation, who know him only through his morning or evening sermons. In such a class as I have in mind he could speak more freely than he could in the pulpit, and, if I am not mistaken, win a closer personal following."

"Talk about strategy ! Under the cover of this class or club you would build up a personal following to checkmate Mr. Brand and his adherents?"

"Certainly. Without organization very little could be accomplished."

"But will Mr. Baldwin consent?"

"I think so. More than once I have heard him express a desire for something of this kind—where he could ask questions—find out what the young people were thinking about—where he could help any one who might be struggling with some problem concerning religious beliefs. Of course we must not let him know that we are forming this organization for any other purpose."

"Of course not."

"And we must get under motion as soon as possible."

"By next week, if nothing happens."

The reply Mr. Brand received in his pastor's sermons had upon him the effect of a challenge. Having persuaded himself of his magnanimity in offering Mr. Baldwin a chance to turn from the error of his way, a chance flatly refused, Mr. Brand told himself again and again while driving from his home to his office, what else could he who knew what his beloved church stood for, do but begin to devise plans for forcing Baldwin's resignation?

During the frequent intervals between pastorates, Mr. Brand usually supplied the pulpit when there was no candidate to preach; if a marriage or a funeral had to be looked after, while the church was without a pastor, Mr. Brand was on

hand to officiate ; if any member of the congregation became ill, Mr. Brand always called to express his sympathy, and if opportunity permitted he would read some verses of Scripture and offer a short prayer before leaving the home. It was not strange, therefore, that many of the more conservative members of the church, unaccustomed to independent thinking on religious subjects, should look up to Mr. Brand and perhaps unconsciously follow his leadership. Without seeming to do so, it was not difficult for him to sow seeds of suspicion broadcast among this element in the church. A word here, a question there, and the pastor's orthodoxy was brought under suspicion.

Mr. Brand had, as we know, not been free from questioning the pastor's orthodoxy before ; now, however, he was persistent and untiring in his efforts to bring Mr. Baldwin into disfavor with the people. With skill he selected certain members of the congregation whom he could most easily inoculate with his suspicions.

After a conversation with Mr. Brand, Mrs. Goodwin and Mrs. North happened to meet a few blocks from the church on their way to the mid-week service.

"And how did you like the sermon last Sunday? A very helpful discourse, wasn't it?" said Mrs. North, after they had proceeded a half a block.

"Helpful? Well, ye-as, in a way ; but I can't say that I approve of all that he said."

"Mr. Baldwin spoke with great earnestness, didn't you think?"

"Ye-as ; but earnestness is a snare and a delusion if what the preacher says is unsound."

"Unsound? Why, what have you heard? I didn't detect anything, did you?"

"Well, at first I wasn't altogether certain whether I agreed with all he said or not."

"I—I felt a little that way, too," admitted Mrs. North.

"Last evening Mr. and Mrs. Brand were in, and incidentally we got to talking about the pastor's discourse. Mr. Brand, you know he's had training in theology, he gave me to understand that the sermon Sunday morning was very unsound."

"You don't say!"

"Yes. And he ought to know."

"Of course, he ought to know, having been a pastor himself."

"It's fortunate we have Mr. Brand to point these things out to us."

"It certainly is for I never dreamed of *that* sermon being unsound."

Only Deacon Nelson was in the lecture-room as the two ladies entered. After an exchange of the usual greetings, the deacon said,

"A fine sermon we had Sunday morning! Such a discourse refreshes the soul like the dews of Lebanon the grass on the hillside."

"Ye-as, but ——"

"You don't mean, Deacon Nelson, you were able to agree with the doctrines of that discourse, do you?" interrupted Mrs. North, a trifle eager to display her power of discrimination.

"Agree with its doctrines? To what do you refer, Sister North?"

"I—er—ah—Sister Goodwin here can express it perhaps better than I can. But the sermon Sunday morning was positively unsound. 'Tis a great pity! Mr. Baldwin's such a gifted man!"

"You say that the sermon was unsound," taking a seat near the two ladies so that they could continue their conversation while the others were coming in; "it may be that you're right. I'm not trained in such matters, as you know. In what points was the discourse unsound?"

Mrs. North waited for Mrs. Goodwin to answer.

"Why, it was unsound all the way through, Deacon Nelson. When a sermon is unsound, it's unsound, isn't it?"

"But that's just what I want'er git at. I don't understand what some of the brethren means when they say a sermon's unsound. This is a new word to me—leastwise when applied to sermons. I'm used to calling a sermon powerful or lacking in power or something of that sort. Now, since I've been hearing the word occasionally I've been trying to find out what it means—Sister North just said that the sermon Sunday morning was unsound. Not having any early eddycation, I've been a learnin' all my life. Now, I'd like to know

the meanin' of unsound when you're talking of a sermon."

Mrs. North again looked at Mrs. Goodwin and waited for her to reply. Mrs. Goodwin fidgeted in her chair. Deacon Nelson was a devout, simple-hearted man whom every one held in high esteem for his childlike spirit, his earnest piety. To ignore his question was impossible.

"Unsound? Why unsound, Deacon Nelson, when applied to a sermon means—why it means that the sermon is—is unorthodox, yes unorthodox. Yes, I don't think I can make it any clearer than that. Of course every one knows what's meant by a sermon's being unorthodox."

"But that also is a new word in my vo-ca-bu-lery, Sister Goodwin. I've often wanted to ask lately the meanin' of that word. Deacon Long used it while talking with me the other day."

Mrs. Goodwin rose from her chair.

"Pardon me!" she exclaimed. "I see Mrs. Marshall coming in the side door. I must speak with her about same committee-work."

Deacon Nelson turned to Mrs. North.

"As I understand it, Deacon Nelson, a sermon is orthodox when—here comes Mr. Strong. He can express it better than I can. We were talking, Mr. Strong, about the exact meaning of the word orthodox. What is your opinion? Of course everybody has a general idea of the meaning of the term; but what we were after is its exact meaning. Now what is your opinion?"

“My opinion? Well I think the ‘exact meaning of the term’ is something like this. A sermon is orthodox when it agrees with my own beliefs and opinions; it’s unorthodox when it doesn’t.” Mr. Strong suppressed a laugh as he passed on to his usual seat on the other side of the room.

“That’s it, Deacon Nelson; a sermon is orthodox when it agrees with what one believes.”

The look of perplexity on the good old man’s face showed that he was not satisfied. As he was about to venture another question, the pastor entered the lecture room and conversation ceased. Mrs. North gave a sigh of relief and joined heartily in the opening hymn.

XXIII

“**I** WAS on my way down to see you,” said Brand, halting his horse as he met Baldwin on the street. “No, it’s not necessary to go back. Just a word about the funeral of Brother Pratt’s little girl.”

Baldwin stepped to the edge of the curb as Brand drove in a little nearer.

“I was expecting to hear that the child was dead. When I was in to see her last evening, she was patiently awaiting her release. Such a patient, brave little soul! I’m glad for her sake that the end has come.”

“Yes,” assented Brand. “I was there when she passed over to the other side,” hesitating a moment. Baldwin waited for him to proceed. “The family have requested me,” he continued, lifting his eyes to Baldwin’s face, “they’ve requested me to take charge of the funeral.”

A blow in the face could not have surprised Baldwin more. Instantly, he felt a great anguish settle over his spirit. Brand, noting the effect of his thrust, with a note of triumph in his voice, went on.

“But the family wanted me to ask you to be present and take some part in the service, say, the prayer before the address.”

“If they’ve asked you to take charge of the

service," replied Baldwin stiffly, in spite of his efforts at self-control, "it will scarcely be necessary for me to be there."

"Oh, well, as you like. Shall I tell them that other demands on your time, other pressing duties interfere?" the note of triumph was now almost if not quite a taunt.

Baldwin's eyes flashed as he met squarely the other's shifting gaze.

"A pastor, Mr. Brand, as you should know, as you do know very well, is never too busy, he never has other duties so pressing that he cannot serve the members of his church when the shadow of death has fallen on the threshold of any home. Good-morning." Baldwin, turning abruptly on his heel, walked rapidly up the street.

Under ordinary circumstances this incident might have very little significance; but the relations between the two men were such that Baldwin could not fail to perceive the professional indignity Brand had intended.

"The scheme will work all right," was Brand's thought as he watched the retreating figure. "No man with his temperament will stand such treatment long."

Brand was right. Some men could endure such treatment. But to David Baldwin it was worse than torture on the rack. The incident stuck in his mind, he couldn't dismiss it. His thoughts clustered about it night after night as he spent hours vainly courting sleep. His digestion suf-

fered. It was into the second week before Baldwin was himself again, before the wound his spirit had suffered was healed.

His peace of mind, however, was of short duration. The thrust came this time by way of Deacon Long, the church treasurer.

"We're some twenty dollars short this month," complained the deacon, handing the envelope to Mr. Baldwin.

"How is this?" asked Baldwin. "I understood that the subscriptions were ample to meet all our financial needs."

"So they are. The subscriptions are sufficient. But some of the members are refusing to meet what they subscribed at the first of the year."

"For what reason?" asked Baldwin bluntly, knowing very well what the deacon wanted to say. "For what reason do some of the members refuse to meet their subscriptions? If they are out of work or have met with financial reverses, we must take these things into consideration."

"But they are not out of work. They could pay easily enough if they wanted to. As I was saying to my wife, all we need is ——"

"But why, then, do they not meet their subscription?" interrupted Baldwin.

"Because," retorted Deacon Long, nervously fingering his hat, "because they're tired of paying any longer for what they don't get. Sister Goodwin said to me, says she, 'I won't pay any more till there's a change. We're not hearing the gos-

pel.' Them's her words. And Sister North has stopped her subscription also. She said to me, says she, 'I have nothing agin Mr. Baldwin, but his sermons are unsound.' Them's her words as I reckoleck them. And there're others feeling the same way. We're short twenty dollars this month and the Lord only knows where we'd be if Brother Brand and some others who don't let such matters interfere with their paying—if they should stop paying too we'd have to close up, I guess. But as I was saying to my ——"

"You have made the situation quite clear, Deacon Long. May I ask one question? This is not the first time I have heard it said that I was not preaching the gospel. I greatly desire, Deacon Long, to know what is meant by that statement. In what respects have I not been preaching the gospel?" Baldwin's tone was cordial, almost confidential, inviting a friendly reply to his question. "The one and sole ambition of my life," he continued earnestly, "is to preach the gospel. Please make it plain to me, Deacon Long, wherein I have not been preaching the gospel."

The deacon was plainly embarrassed.

"Well,—er—ah," stammered the deacon, "there has been more or less of a feeling from the first that your sermons were—ah—er—at times unsound."

"Yes, I've heard that, too, before. May we let that pass? Let us try to get at the meaning of that other statement, about my not preaching the

gospel. Please give me your opinion. What did Mrs. Goodwin mean? What would you mean by that expression?"

"Why—ah—ah—any one knows what preaching the gospel means."

"And to the best of my knowledge *I* have been preaching the gospel, Deacon Long. Not for one minute have I knowingly preached anything else."

"But you—you don't believe in the divinity of Christ, do you? How can one preach the gospel if he don't believe in the divinity of Christ?"

"Deacon Long, I believe in the divinity of Christ just as firmly as you do. With all my heart I accept the divinity of Christ."

"Why, er—er, I er—ah, Brother Brand was a-saying that you denied the divinity of Christ. Of course I never heard you say much about it one way or the other. All I know is what he told me."

The deacon was beginning to perspire.

"Mr. Brand has drawn an unwarranted conclusion from a conversation we had one day," replied Baldwin, in an even tone. "I find he is apt to do that sometimes. It is exceedingly easy to misinterpret the beliefs of those who do not agree with us."

"But you do not accept the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Birth, do you?" said the deacon, mixing up theological terms with his usual lack of discrimination as to their meaning.

"The Immaculate Conception and the Virgin Birth are two distinct subjects, Deacon Long. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception grew up in the medieval church and was the subject of great controversy. It means that the Virgin Mary was born sinless and has therefore only indirect reference to Christ. Do you believe, deacon, that the Virgin Mary was born sinless?"

"Why, of course I believe it. I believe what the Bible teaches from cover to cover. When once we begin to throw this or that out of the Bible, as I was saying to my wife, we ——"

"But the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is not taught anywhere in the Bible, Deacon Long."

"It ain't! Why—ah, where is it taught, then? Mebbe you'll be a-saying pretty soon that there ain't any such doctrine?"

"Oh, yes, there is. The doctrine is one of the accepted dogmas in the Catholic church. The term Immaculate Conception has of course passed into general literature. But the doctrine does not belong to Protestantism at all."

"Not belong to Protestantism! Do you mean to tell me that I've been all these years a-holding a Catholic belief?"

"A doctrine, Deacon Long, if it is true, is none the worse for being a dogma of the Catholic church."

"And you say the Immaculate Conception ain't in the Bible?" persisted the deacon.

"Any well informed clergyman will tell you," replied Baldwin, "that the idea grew up in the thought of the middle ages. Indeed, it was not formally accepted by the Catholic church until the middle of the nineteenth century. Protestantism has never, in any of its great bodies, shown a friendly attitude toward the idea. It may of course be true. In many respects it is a beautiful thought—that Christ's mother was sinless. Of course such a thought naturally leads to the worship of the Virgin. But any religious belief which satisfies the human soul, helping men and women to bear the burdens of life, is a boon to humanity. But as the individual grows his beliefs must grow with him. So is it with the race."

The deacon, unable to appreciate the meaning of his pastor's remarks, reverted to his former question.

"But the birth of Christ—Brand told me you denied the birth of Christ," said he, not a little confused.

"You mean, I suppose, what is called the Virgin Birth of Christ," corrected Baldwin.

"Yes, ain't that what I said?"

"What you meant, probably. This subject, the Virgin birth of Christ, Deacon Long, is one of the great topics in present day religious thinking. Many devout scholars are slowly thinking their way into it. Books are being written upon it. To you and to the great majority of church people the problem has not yet arisen. It is to the New

Testament something like what the creation-problem was to the Old Testament. But these, Deacon Long, are questions for the specialist. We need not concern ourselves overmuch about them. Creation *is*—that's the great fact. Each age is bound to explain this fact according to all the knowledge it possesses. The people thousands of years ago had their explanations, embodying their best thought ; and each succeeding age has the same right to explain the fact over again, if the former interpretation seems inadequate."

"But that makes the Bible untrue, don't it?" objected the deacon. "What you say seems all right if it—if it didn't upset our belief in the Bible, the Word of God. As I was saying to my ——"

"That all depends, Deacon Long, on what our attitude is toward the Bible. Here again is another of the great present day problems in religious thought. Many earnest workers in the intellectual realm are giving their lives to it. Believe me, greater problems confront the Christian scholar to-day than ever before in the history of the church. Indeed, the Reformation in the time of Erasmus and Luther was no greater movement than the one now on. The struggle then as now embodied a contest between the Old and the New. Fully to understand these great movements and their bearings on religious beliefs is the task, I might say, of a lifetime."

Plainly the deacon was mystified. Though he

understood each separate word, the meaning of it all could not have been more obscure had Baldwin spoken to him in an unknown tongue. One impression, however, had beaten itself in upon him. The minister's task was not so simple as it had seemed.

"But why does a minister have to study about all these things? What good does it do? Why not just preach the gospel which is able to save to the uttermost?"

"Every problem of life, Deacon Long, is in some way related to the gospel, some very closely and some more remotely. Is it not one of the high functions of religion to help a man solve his problems rightly? How can a minister proclaim the gospel unless he knows the problems of his age?"

"But what has that to do with salvation?" objected the deacon, edging his way toward the door. "Ain't it enough to save men's souls and build 'em up in the faith? That's what I'd call preaching the gospel. All this worldly knowledge, as I was saying to my wife, says I, it's a snare and a delusion. Give me the simple gospel. And there're many others in the church who feel jest as I do. We feel, to speak plain, that we're not a-getting in the sermons which have been preached in our pulpit during the past year or two, the simple gospel."

"Deacon Long, do you honestly believe that the financial condition you have reported to me is due to a belief among the people that I am not

preaching the gospel?" Baldwin's eyes were kindly but earnestly fixed on the old gentleman's face.

"Why, ah—er, to what else could it be due?" he replied evasively, as he was leaving Baldwin's study.

"The families you've mentioned pay so little that I thought there must be some other reason for a large part of the deficiency."

"You question my honesty!" cried the deacon, working himself into a rage.

"Not at all, not at all, Deacon Long. No one questions your honesty. Only I thought that perhaps you could suggest some additional reason for the present financial condition, that's all. Good-morning, Deacon Long, good-morning."

On taking the car at the end of the next block, Deacon Long was so confused that he did not notice it was going in the wrong direction until he had been carried seven blocks out of his way.

"Twist number two!" commented Baldwin, as he counted the contents of the envelope which the deacon had handed him. "There is more than one way of putting a man on the rack. I begin to wonder just how many twists of the wheel I shall be able to withstand."

Still he sat looking at the pile of currency, composed of nickels, dimes and quarters in large profusion, together with half dollars, dollars, and a few larger bills. For several minutes Baldwin was lost in meditation.

"No," was his conclusion, "there is no remedy; no redress without a church fight, which would simply wreck the church. I could never stand that. It would simply kill me. I must seek another pastorate."

But how? He would write to some of the boys whom he knew well in the divinity school. Perhaps they could put him in touch with some churches about to make a change.

In due time replies came from each of the men to whom he had written. These letters from half a dozen ministers scattered in neighboring states were very similar in their essential feature—sorry to hear he was thinking of leaving Tioga, still sorrier that they were unable to suggest his name to any available church; but if an opening should occur within their notice, they would be only too glad to present his name to the pulpit committee.

Before the returns were all in from the first half dozen letters, Baldwin wrote to a dozen more fellows whom he knew not quite so well.

"Surely, something favorable will come from some of these," was his comment as he dropped the letters into the office.

Anxiously he awaited results. Two days pass and two more; the evening's mail brings two returns. Carlin's letter was very cordial, though Baldwin had known him only a short time during his last half-year; if only he had known a little sooner that Baldwin was thinking of a change—

there was a good church near him but they had called a new man only the week before.

"It would have been just the field for a man of your type. I can understand your problem at Tioga and you have my sympathy. I know the men—the man—you are up against. No need of saying any more. Be assured I shall keep you in mind."

Rhodes' reply was almost a duplicate of some he had already received. For a week answers kept coming in, and the more they came the lower David's expectations sank. It seemed that no one of his clerical friends knew of a vacant pulpit. Talk about a dearth of ministers! Why, where was the room for a single one more? Nearly twenty letters had failed to locate the spot!

Brand, meanwhile was tireless in his opposition, and Baldwin was made to feel more keenly the growing defection when the Fawcett-Brown wedding occurred without his presence—Mr. Brand being invited to officiate.

The Monday evening club, however, was truly a newly found source of support. He told Miriam more than once that he did not see how he ever got along without it.

"We have such good times! The members seem so eager for what I am able to give. I shall always bless Tom Stewart for his suggestion."

"But, dear, I think you ought not to undertake so much. You are doing altogether too much.

You do not know what a care-worn look has settled upon your brow," Miriam kept telling him.

"But now that you are getting at the helm again, sweetheart, I shall soon be all right. A man without a wife to look after him is a pretty poor stick, isn't he? Some of us need so much looking after, perhaps the old plan of having two or half a dozen wives wasn't so bad after all."

"But, David, dear, you are working too hard. You seem—well, not like your natural self."

"I—I don't sleep as well as I used to," he admitted, guardedly. "A little indigestion probably."

"And you have so little relish for your food!" she added with increasing concern.

"But now that you're getting about again, you'll soon see what an appetite I'll have, sweetheart. But you must not worry about me. My work is a little hard just now. This heat, I suppose, has something to do with it."

"You should take a rest. Why are you not taking any vacation this summer?"

"Perhaps we will, dear, a little later. It has not suited me to do so yet."

Miriam had almost recovered her physical strength and her mind was clear; but the physician had cautioned Baldwin to use the greatest care in keeping her free from worry, and all anxiety, all mental stress or strain.

"Anxiety or worry may suddenly undo all that these weeks have built up. Mrs. Baldwin needs

absolute freedom from mental strain. In fact, it is her only hope," said Doctor Wood. "Neither yourself nor any member of the church must discuss the affairs of the church in her presence."

So David Baldwin with aching heart continued to bear alone the burden which he did not dare to share with his wife. But human hearts like his are not made to bear burdens alone. The condition would be so much easier to endure with Miriam's sympathy.

That night after Miriam had retired, David wrote five more letters, addressing one to Dr. Harmon, his favorite professor in the divinity school, one to the president of his *alma mater* and the other three to prominent ministers in the denomination.

"O God!" he prayed, his head bowed on his writing table, "direct thou me. Lead me, O God, for I cannot find my way alone. Let some relief come to thy servant. Thou, O Lord, knowest that his need is great."

The conscious need of the human heart has in all ages brought humanity into closer relations with deity. Perhaps this is the meaning of the hard experiences of life—who knows? Is not life a school? Was not David Baldwin facing one of the age-long lessons of the race,—that only through the individual's conscious need is he brought into closer fellowship with God? But in the midst of the lesson its meaning was anything but clear. But day after day as he poured forth

his soul in fervent petition for guidance, praying as he had rarely prayed before, the divine Presence seemed to him more real. Is spiritual vision ever raised from lower to higher degree of clearness save through suffering? The question is an old one. Who is able to answer it?

But the answers to his letters brought no relief. Must he resign and enter that class so much dreaded by his profession—that of becoming a churchless pastor? The dread of the morrow settled more heavily upon him.

XXIV

THAT there is a meaning in the hard experiences of life, the pain, the sorrow, the anguish of spirit which comes sooner or later in some form to all, David Baldwin had more than once presented in his sermons.

“These experiences are but means of developing in us a higher quality of spirit,” he had said.

It had been easy to utter these words, urging solace and comfort to others; but to learn the lesson himself—that quality of spirit comes through suffering—was indeed quite a different matter. Gradually, however, without relaxing his efforts to secure another church, Baldwin was brought into a closer, a more personal knowledge of many of the spiritual conceptions he had previously held only as theory. His sermons became more vital, more human and less scholastic as the discipline of his own heart clarified his spiritual vision. Through his own sufferings he was entering into a larger, a more intimate brotherhood with the common man. The language of books was being displaced by the language of life.

To Sylvester Brand this deeper note in his pastor's sermons was but another evidence of Baldwin's doctrinal unsoundness. Accordingly his opposition became even more relentless. When the month closed the financial condition was a little

worse than at the end of the preceding one. Baldwin made no complaint, knowing that such a move on his part would precipitate matters that much sooner. With nothing definite in view, he continued writing letters to various clergymen in the denomination, with the hope of securing information which might lead to another settlement. Surely something must open soon. David Baldwin's extremity drove him into closer fellowship with God. His greater need held him more frequently and longer in intense communion with deity.

On the following Sunday morning as Baldwin poured forth his soul in a remarkable sermon, Prisoners of the Present being his theme, there were many persons in his congregation who felt while under the spell of his utterances that the preacher was reading and interpreting some of their own innermost thoughts.

"It was a most searching sermon, mother, one of the most searching discourses I ever heard," said Mr. Stewart, opening the discussion at their Sunday dinner. "In many of his statements he seemed to be looking into the depths of my own heart."

To Deacon Long the sermon afforded considerable material for his note-book. His sportsmanlike instinct was literally satiated with heretical statements, heretical because they contained an emphasis he had not been accustomed to hearing in his earlier days.

Meanwhile, the Monday evening club under the efficient leadership of Tom Stewart was a large factor in making Baldwin's situation bearable. These meetings held for an hour or two in the church parlors afforded Baldwin an opportunity which he had long coveted. Any religious question perplexing the minds of his young people, he would take up and discuss with them. These meetings sometimes fairly bristled with interrogation points.

"The vital thing," he kept telling them at the end of various discussions, "is not what you believe about the Bible or about the Christ. The vital thing is—Do you accept the Christ as the Master of your life? To be possessed by the Christ-spirit to the central thing in Christianity."

"Would you accept a man for membership in your church who while believing in the divinity of Christ, could not believe that explanation of his origin—the Virgin Birth?" asked Mr. Parker the young lawyer.

"Certainly I would, Mr. Parker. If the man has accepted Christ as his master, other things are secondary. By emphasizing considerations which are not fundamental we divide Christendom into numerous rival sects, and thus impede the work of the church in many communities. Rival churches in small towns not infrequently do more harm than they do good."

Baldwin was surprised and delighted to find that his young people were thinking for them-

selves on many religious subjects through which he himself had struggled little by little into more liberal conceptions. His own experience enabled him to guide others walking along the same path.

"How thankful I am," said he to Miriam as they were returning from one of these Monday evening meetings, "that my own experience enables me to guide the thinking of these young people. If I were not liberal in my own thinking I would be under the necessity of repressing their questions."

"Yes; and make them feel that they were wicked for having liberal thoughts," replied Miriam. "That is the way my pastor at home always made me feel whenever he talked with me. I am sure, dear, that you are doing for these young men and women just what would have been so helpful to me, if I could have had such a pastor."

"Thank you, dearest. And I'm so glad to have you attend some of the services again. I think you are right in not wanting to go to the regular church services yet. But it does seem so good, sweetheart, to have you at these Monday evening meetings."

"I haven't heard you say anything special about Mr. Brand for some time, dear. I hope he has ceased annoying you?"

"Oh, Mr. Brand and I? Well, come to think about it, I haven't said much about him lately, have I? We are—we are getting on, after a fashion, yes, after a fashion."

"And Mr. Driver? You haven't mentioned him for some time. Has he been away?"

"Let me see? Yes, Driver has been away some. I pay no more attention to Driver and Brand than I find is necessary. There are so many others in the church whom I find more congenial. By the way, how are you liking Mrs. James?"

"She's splendid! She's my ideal. And she speaks so highly of your sermons, dear. She wants us to take dinner with them Friday evening."

"That will be fine," said David, breathing a sigh of relief. He was glad to get Miriam away from any thoughts or questions concerning the pillars of the church. Anxiety would even yet undo the slow gain of many weeks. To shield her from this anxiety David Baldwin was leading a double life. He compelled himself to wear a smile in her presence when often his heart was heavy and sad; he found himself reading the funny column in the papers in order to have something cheerful to say at their meals. But many of the funny things he read he could not remember; so this led to his keeping a joke-book.

"You see, I can't use these as illustrations in my sermons," he told Miriam, laughingly. "So you have to suffer. You see, I have to share them with some one. Half the enjoyment of a good joke consists in telling it again." Thus the situation was saved by humor.

"No," objected Sylvester Brand to Deacon Long's proposal of calling a church meeting. "The time hasn't come for that yet. Some things, I tell you, deacon, have to be done under cover, and this is one of them."

"But my note-book—what's the good of all them unsound statements if we're not a-going to use them?" complained Deacon Long, turning the leaves of a leather-bound note-book he was holding in his hand. "And I've listened through many a sermon to get all them statements, every one of 'em unsound. If we want him to go, what more do we need? If we can prove to the church that he's unsound, ain't that all that's necessary? As I was saying to my ——"

"Your idea, deacon, is all right when the proper time comes; when the proper time comes, deacon. Your notes are valuable, of great value; and we'll use them, too; but not now. We must not think of letting this matter come openly before the church, when we can accomplish our purpose a thousand times better by working along other lines."

"But don't we want to get rid of him because he's unsound? Ain't that the reason we want him to go?" persisted Deacon Long, querulously.

"Yes, certainly," assented Brand.

"Then why not have a church meeting and show up his unsoundness?" demanded Deacon Long, contending with unusual obstinacy for his point. "We've got the material right here," pat-

ting his note-book complacently. "Every page in this little book contains one or more of his unsound utterances. As I was saying to ——"

"Your plan would work to perfection, deacon, if it were not for one thing, for just one thing," Brand repeated in his quiet impressive manner which always had great weight with Deacon Long. "I would join you in a moment, in calling a church meeting if it were not for one thing," pronouncing the last two words with great solemnity. Brand was finding the simple minded deacon a little more difficult to manage than usual. "The one objection is this. There are any number of members in this church, as in most congregations, who don't know what unsound doctrine is, and what's more neither you nor I could convince them, either. *We* know he's unsound. But to save your soul, you couldn't convince one half of the members of this church of that fact. I know what I'm talking about," significantly.

"Couldn't convince 'em? I don't see why we couldn't with all these statements right here in black and white! If a statement's unsound, it's unsound, ain't it? I don't see, Brand, that your objection holds. I'm for fighting the Lord's battles openly. To speak plainly, I—I am not, well, I do not fully approve of—of some of the things we've been a-doing." At last Jacob Long had brought himself to register the protest which had been struggling for weeks to express itself.

Sylvester Brand looked at the deacon for a mo-

ment. "You want him to resign, don't you?" he asked quietly.

"You know that as well as I do," retorted the deacon.

"You believe that he's undermining the very foundations of this church?"

Long answered only with a nod of his head.

"The officers of this church have a most solemn responsibility placed on their shoulders," continued Brand. "Strange doctrines, upsetting the very foundations of this church, are being proclaimed in our midst. And what's more, a considerable element in the church is already carried away by these doctrines. I tell you, deacon, this is no time to quibble! I myself feel much as you do about some of the things we have done. But the blame deacon, rests upon him, not upon us. Has not God raised us up for this very purpose—to be defenders of the faith?"

"I have no quarrel with Mr. Baldwin, personally," he went on. "Indeed, I more than half like him in spite of his heresy. But can a man evade his destiny? Willingly, I tell you, I would evade mine, if I could. But I cannot. The doctrines of my church are dear to me, dearer than life. At the peril of my soul would I defend them."

Jacob Long was plainly overawed by these solemn words of his colleague. One thought he caught and turned over and over in his mind, finding consolation in it.

"As you say, the blame is his'n. If there was

no necessity we wouldn't have to do nothing. But since he's unsound, the blame *is* his'n."

"Yes, and what we must work for is to bring about his resignation quietly. He won't be able to stand this much longer—all we've got to do is to keep it up. Now that the Marshalls have taken a stand with us we shall be able to give the wheel another turn," unconsciously using an allusion to the old inquisitorial instrument of torture.

"What do you have in mind, now?" asked the deacon with little show of interest.

"The Marshalls are about to issue invitations to a reception—quite an elaborate affair."

"Yes, I know."

"And Mrs. Marshall has finally consented to leave the Baldwins off her list."

"Do you think Mr. Baldwin will care?" asked the deacon with scorn in his tone. "I'm never invited to Mrs. Marshall's receptions and I don't care. I wouldn't go if I was invited. These fashionable receptions—how often do you see these same people in prayer-meeting? As I was saying to my wife, these ——"

"But if you were a pastor, deacon, and one of your prominent families were to ignore you socially, in the most public manner, I tell you, you would care. Ministers feel such things very keenly."

"I suppose there's a difference when one is a minister," admitted Deacon Long. "But I have little faith in your scheme. If it don't produce re-

sults, I shall insist on having a church meeting called." The deacon had risen from his comfortable chair in Mr. Brand's private office. "If the resignation ain't forthcoming within, say, three weeks, I shall insist on bringing the material of my note-book before a church meeting. Do you agree to this?" he asked facing the other man almost savagely.

Brand hesitated. "Yes," he finally answered; "if the resignation isn't forthcoming at the end of three, no, make it four weeks, I am agreed to calling a church meeting."

Victory at last! Jacob Long's sombre face wore a shadowy smile as he took his departure. For weeks and months he had been collecting specimens of unsound doctrine; these he would now have the opportunity of exhibiting.

"I never before saw him so persistent," muttered Brand, turning to a pile of correspondence. "Humph, that note-book! How he has enjoyed that note-book! But what does it amount to? Nothing, nothing at all. And a church meeting? The very thing we should avoid. Whatever possessed me to agree to it? But it shall not occur. That resignation shall be on hand—if, if, well there are more ways than one of causing a minister to want to resign."

Gathering several papers in his hands and arranging others before him, he touched a button at the side of his desk. Immediately his stenographer entered.

"We'll get these letters off now, John," said he. The defender of the faith had become a captain of industry.

Sylvester Brand's office was equipped in a manner similar to any one of ten thousand offices of successful business men,—that is, with all the modern, labor-saving devices which have completely transformed the business world within the past quarter of a century.

His business had grown steadily and for a few years his sales were in excess of any of his competitors in the city. He had attained this position at the head of the coal and wood business in Tioga only by adjusting himself a little sooner than his associates to new methods of handling his business, in the changing conditions of a growing city.

He had done in the coal and wood industry exactly what Baldwin had done in his special line—kept up with the times. Progress in business had brought the telephone, the typewriter, the stenographer, and a sharp division of labor, giving to each man his special task. Evidences of progress were on all sides, and men not in business accepted these changes without questioning their right to exist.

In the sphere of religious thought the last quarter of a century has witnessed progress equal at least if not surpassing that of the industrial world. In his business, the realm in which he was intellectually alert, and in which he really lived,

Mr. Brand was an ardent advocate of progressive ideas ; but in the realm of religious thinking he had not lived, he was intellectually inactive, and his very definite set of theological conceptions owing to their very definiteness, became a hindrance to his further development.

Further, in his psychology there was no distinction between religious faith and explanations concerning this faith. Religious faith which is an attitude of the heart toward deity he confused with doctrines and beliefs, formal explanations of faith, but of necessity transient and bound to change with the growing knowledge of the individual or of the race.

His religious zeal not finding its natural outlet in the work of the ministry for which he had prepared himself but was compelled to relinquish owing to some throat difficulty, it was not unnatural for a man of his temperament to drift into the attitude of a self-appointed guardian of orthodoxy. The standard of right belief which to him was absolutely final was of course the theological conceptions he had reached at the close of his brief career as a pastor. These he identified with the beliefs of the denomination.

In his opposition to modern religious thought Brand was honest. In his mind modern thought was a more dangerous foe to religion and the church than infidelity had ever been or could be. Immorality and drunkenness were less a menace to the church than this hydra-headed monster,

modern thought. How his soul stirred within him as he saw this plague of pernicious ideas sweep over the land! Oh, for the power to quarantine the church against the ravages of this plague!—if not all Christendom, at least his own beloved denomination.

When every community contains its own guardian of orthodoxy, its own defender of the faith, it is needless to employ further words in this narrative to set forth the attitude of Sylvester Brand. His type is too well known. He exists everywhere, the champion of religious beliefs which the intellectual world has outgrown. He thinks he is a champion of religion. Herein is a thousand pities. What he really desires to accomplish—the promotion of religion—he seriously obstructs. For he would make the thought of yesterday a substitute for the thinking of to-day.

Perhaps it is well that these guardians and defenders of the faith do not know how much suffering they sometimes cause. Sylvester Brand knew that David Baldwin was suffering under his treatment of him, yet such is the power of religious zeal when unbalanced with the common sentiments of humanity, Brand pursued his prey without compassion or mercy. O Religion, how many crimes have men committed in thy fair name!

The records of yesterday and of the day before tell us of tortures in dungeons, of burnings at the stake, of the wheel and the rack, and of instru-

ments of torture almost beyond the imagination of man to construct; of men and women and little children suffering deaths too horrible to portray. But to die for a cause is not a greater sacrifice than to live and suffer for it.

Into the weeks following Brand's promise to Deacon Long there was pressed all the annoyance, humiliation, indignity for David Baldwin that Sylvester Brand's fertile brain could devise and accomplish. What an inquisitor-general he would have made if only the spirit of the times permitted!

Tom Stewart and other friends of the pastor, though they knew of only a few of the indignities Baldwin had to endure, were determined to marshal the members of the church in favor of the present régime and suppress Brand's persecution, which his opposition to Baldwin had now virtually become.

"No, friends, we must not have a church fight," Baldwin kept telling them. "There are few more regrettable affairs on earth than a church torn asunder."

"But, man, this thing can't go on. It's simply killing you," protested Tom Stewart. "How any Christian can act as Sylvester Brand has is beyond me. To judge from his actions toward you, one would think that you were the very devil."

"Rather, that Brand himself is a devil," said Mr. Strong who was calling on Mr. Baldwin at the time.

"Well, either way or both," replied Tom savagely. "Sylvester Brand is working night and day to bring about your resignation," he continued, addressing Baldwin. "You have already endured too much, far too much from his hand. Not one man in ten would have stood his treatment as long. And he has fully a third of the members of this church under his thumb. He's their priest. He does their thinking. He uses every method known to the politician to bind these people to him. He's a regular boss—a church boss."

"And we must organize to checkmate him or he will accomplish his purpose," said Mr. Strong. "Dominie, you must untie our hand. Withdraw your veto and we'll attend to this matter in short order. As Tom says, this state of affairs cannot go on much longer. Why, I'm getting on the ragged edge of nervous prostration myself. The whole church is in a state of strain. If you don't withdraw your veto, why we'll have to proceed, veto or no veto, dominie."

"You have promised me, both of you, to do nothing of the sort. I stand where I've stood from the beginning—we must not split the church. I'm glad for your support. Life here would be unbearable without it. Perhaps it would be best if I should resign at once. That would relieve the situation."

"I tell you, dominie, you shall do nothing of the kind. Not while a considerable majority of

the members desire you to continue with us. You are doing for us what no other pastor has done. Your sermons are of the kind we want. If Brand doesn't fancy them, let him go elsewhere. Some of us have had to feed in other churches occasionally when he was having his type of preaching in this church."

"Yes, or let him stay home and preach to himself," said Tom. "I'll double my subscription in a moment if he would."

"There's no danger of his staying away—he's too good a fighter for that," said Strong. "But I'm in a quandary, dominie."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, I promised Mrs. Strong I'd get your consent to our doing something. You may expect a call from her as soon as I get home."

"I always enjoy her calls," replied Baldwin, lightly.

"She's determined that this matter shall be adjusted one way or the other. After coming home from the Marshalls' the other evening, she was so stirred up she didn't sleep any all night. She declares she will not rest till something is done. So, dominie, it's up to you, as the boys say. Which will it be—your consent to some move on the part of your friends or—your resignation?"

"I'm exceedingly sorry that Mrs. Strong has had to lose any sleep over this condition. Sleepless nights *are* terrible. What a luxury to go to bed and sleep till morning! But with reference to

calling a church-meeting as you proposed a while ago, I fear the consequences. In the present condition of affairs, would not such a move be the first step toward a church fight? I am certain it would be better for the community for me to resign."

"But we don't want you to resign," persisted Tom, vehemently. "And may I ask—the question I know is personal—but have you any church in mind to which you could go?"

"No," answered Baldwin, slowly. "I have no other church in view. But that needn't matter," he added.

"If it comes to the worst and you feel that you must resign rather than let your friends organize against this opposition, would it be difficult for you to get another church?" Tom asked. "I—I feel that we should know what your prospects would be. Is it easy or not for a minister in our denomination to get a suitable church, one that would furnish a reasonable support, when he resigns without having anything in view?"

Baldwin replied, "The situation is something like this: When a man doesn't want to make a change, he usually has various opportunities and invitations coming his way, if he is doing good work. But let that same man resign without a call elsewhere and thus become a minister without a church and at once he becomes discounted by at least ninety per cent. He is practically in no demand whatever. Churches look upon him with suspicion. Indeed, I know of more than one in-

stance where pastors have endured shameful treatment a year or two years rather than resign before obtaining a call elsewhere."

"Great God! Is this what it means to be a minister?" cried Tom Stewart, jumping to his feet. "Come, Strong, we have heard enough!"

"No, don't ask what we're going to do," said Strong interrupting Baldwin's question. "And see here, dominie, you might as well tear up that resignation you've got tucked away somewhere in your desk. You're not going to resign the pastorate of this church under any such circumstances. Your friends simply cannot permit it. Tear it up, dominie; tear it up. If ever the time comes to use such a document, you can write another. But that time has not come yet. You are in the hands of your friends. Rest content. Our regards to Mrs. Baldwin. Good-bye."

Not trusting himself for further speech, Baldwin silently pressed their hands as the two men left his study. When he was alone, Baldwin turned the key in the central drawer of his desk, took out a sheet of paper and carefully read it.

"How did Strong know, I wonder?" he mused. "It has certainly given me some relief just to write the thing. Oh, if only I could see my way clear to hand it in!"

Baldwin sat at his desk, lost for the moment in the intensity of his meditation.

"Why don't I? Why do I not free myself from this terrible strain? The remedy lies in

using that sheet of paper. Why, then, don't I use it? What makes me hesitate? Ah, it's the dread of the morrow—the dread of facing a morrow without anything to do!"

Who of us does not appreciate such a motive? To half of the world at least the bread and butter problem is never out of sight. The wage-earner is bound to his task by the dread of facing a morrow in which he can find no work. What self-abasement individuals endure, thousands of them, rather than endanger their means of support! And what robs a man sooner of his dignity, his self-respect than being without work? A miserable sense of defeat settles like a cloud upon the soul of the man who cannot find work—the work he has fitted himself to perform.

From the very nature of a minister's preparation for his life-work together with the professional and social dignity attached to his position in the community as a clergyman, David Baldwin was filled with a great reluctance toward taking up any other means of earning his support. He recalled with a shudder the fate of his friend Thayer at Oak Park. After his resignation from the Calvary church Thayer had been forced to take up the insurance business to support his family. And having once thus unclassed himself Thayer had never been able to regain his professional standing.

"Save me, O God, from such a fate," breathed Baldwin. "Something must open soon. I will

wait a little longer," replacing the sheet in the drawer and turning the key.

Though it was in the middle of the forenoon and in the early part of the week, Baldwin found he could not study. After repeated efforts to hold his mind to his work, he went out into the street and walked rapidly up town but without any definite object in view. As he walked and walked an objective point emerged in his consciousness. Without any thought of doing so when he left his study, he determined to call on Mrs. Hunter. The need of his spirit seemed to guide him to this little home where he had called so often. For Mrs. Hunter was one of the saints to be found in every community. She was past sixty and blind.

In her presence Baldwin always found an atmosphere of peace, of spiritual repose. The need of his restless spirit took him into this atmosphere now. As he waited a moment on the threshold, he thought what a high function it was to create about one's self such a spiritual restfulness. The mere gathering of possessions was as nothing in comparison to it. Nor should the mere accumulation of knowledge be mentioned in the same breath. Hers was an attainment in quality of spirit.

After spending a half hour in conversation with Mrs. Hunter, Baldwin felt the burden of unrest had slipped away from him and in its place he had gained something of this godly woman's own attitude toward the perplexities of life. The high

quality of her spirit had passed by an irresistible contagion into his own heart. Dear saint, you will never know how David Baldwin's troubled spirit was calmed and strengthened by these half hours in your presence. Such a service, however, is, in being able to render it, a sufficient reward in itself.

XXV

DAVID BALDWIN was conscious that he was rapidly approaching the limit of his endurance. After each successive evidence of Brand's efforts against him, he found himself so disturbed that whole nights were spent in vain endeavors to lose consciousness of the indignity he had suffered. He prayed for sleep, he watched innumerable flocks of sheep jump over the pasture fence, he stood by his bedside and raised himself upon his toes hundreds of times, he read chapter after chapter of interesting narrative, he even read some of the chapters backward, but all to no avail. The moment he turned out the light and began to compose himself for sleep, that moment the church situation would insist on possessing his mind. Dismiss it he could not. With the need of sleep pressing hard upon him, he found himself shut out from its restful, restorative embrace.

Torture? Who would not prefer to be subjected to the physical pain of the rack or the wheel or any of the other terrible instruments of the inquisition than to be a helpless victim in the power of one who stood between you and sleep? To deprive a man of food is an act so inhuman that no civilized community permits such treatment to be

inflicted even upon its most dangerous criminals ; but any man can live longer without food than without sleep. What, then, must be the nature of that treatment whereby one man deliberately plans to stand between another human being and his sleep? Sylvester Brand, in his zeal to protect the creed of his fathers from the contamination of modern thought, was doing exactly what Torquemada did four hundred years before, only he was accomplishing his purpose by a slower method of killing off the heretic. Their spirit and motive were very similar. Yes, both were honest men ; men with strong religious convictions ; men who truly believed they were serving not only their God but also their day and generation, by compelling the acceptance or preservation of a creed.

Brand was right. Baldwin could not endure his treatment much longer. His step had lost its elasticity, his face was thin, and on his brow sat anxiety. He no longer cared to eat—the processes of digestion refused to make use of the food he did manage to swallow. He longed to become a free man but he did not dare use the means which would make him free. He had written over two score of letters without obtaining any prospects of another settlement should he resign. But from Miriam he carefully concealed all these things.

“Mrs. Baldwin is gaining slowly, making some progress every week,” Doctor Wood told him. “We have every reason to hope for a complete mental recovery. But it is still imperative that

she be kept free from mental strain, from all anxiety or worry. As you value her life you must keep from her all knowledge of this church situation."

"I know, doctor; that is what I am trying to do. Several of the church families have conspired with me to keep her in ignorance of what Mr. Brand has been doing. But daily I live in dread of what the morrow may by chance word reveal to her."

"Isn't there some way in your church of suppressing a man like Mr. Brand?" asked Dr. Wood.

"There is, but I do not care to use it. It would mean a church fight."

"Ah! I see. But your friends, Mr. Baldwin, cannot permit this to go on indefinitely. Too long, much too long the First Church has been dominated by two or three of its members. Indeed, I have said to Professor James more than once that the best thing that could happen to the First Church would be two or three first class funerals."

"It certainly is a good thing that some men do not live forever," admitted Baldwin.

"Yes, if the age limit were doubled, other things remaining as they are, human progress would be sadly retarded. It has not infrequently happened that champions of the Old have had to die off before the newer ideas could have a chance to grow. This has been true not only in medicine

and theology but in government and doubtless in every department of human activity."

"I agree with you. Yet I recall at this moment certain men old enough to be my father who are fresh and vigorous in their thinking and who champion the thought of to-day rather than the ideas of a generation ago."

"We have, I am glad to say, some men of that type in our community. But most men are like Mr. Brand—they grow and keep up with the world in certain sections of their life, while in other sections they have made no progress for years. With us physicians, however, it makes little difference whether a patient's ideas of medicine are up to date or not. In medicine the layman does not question the decision of the specialist. With you preachers it is different. The preacher is a specialist in his realm. Yet every layman in his audience sits in judgment on his utterances, and feels qualified to put his own untrained thinking up as a standard by which to measure the theology of his pastor. In medicine this attitude would not be tolerated."

"Yet what we need in our churches is not less thinking on the part of the members; for this always tends to make the preacher into a priest. Our great need is the general recognition that creeds are only incidental to religion—that religion is relationship or attitude toward God. It is not the acceptance of this or that belief about Christ but the acceptance of Christ himself as our

master, our ideal which is the central thing in Christianity."

"Would you on that basis accept me for membership in your church?" asked Dr. Wood, turning about in his office chair.

"Most assuredly I would," answered Baldwin.

"Even if I told you of my inability to accept the virgin birth accounts of his origin?" persisted the physician.

"That would make no difference. Men are not saved from sinning by the acceptance of this or that belief about Christ. It is belief *in Christ*; it is the possession of his spirit, his attitude which makes a man a Christian, Dr. Wood."

"You utter my own thoughts, Mr. Baldwin. For years I have held these opinions. They have kept me outside the church, while in my own way I have daily endeavored to follow the Christ."

"I see no reason why they should keep you any longer out of the First Church, Dr. Wood."

"Nor I. Surely one may be as liberal as his pastor. I want some part in what you are trying to do, Mr. Baldwin. As a member of the church I believe I could mean more to your work than I possibly could outside. You may propose my name for membership whenever you think best."

"Thank you, Dr. Wood," Baldwin said, tears of gratitude and joy suffusing his eyes. "Your words have put heart into me again."

It was well for David Baldwin that he was thus strengthened, as it were, in the inner man by this

conversation with Dr. Wood; for on his way home that afternoon he heard of Brand's purpose of calling a church meeting. A church meeting? Brand could have but one object—his resignation. This public move seemed to Baldwin to be the climax of the series. And Miriam? How could he keep Miriam from knowledge of this public meeting? It would doubtless be in the papers. Dr. Wood's warning rang in his ears. What could he do? Before reaching his home Baldwin was resolved to take Miriam away from Tioga. It would be to imperil her life not to act at once.

During the evening his opportunity came.

"My dear," said Miriam solicitously, "you are working too hard; you are getting so thin and worn."

"I *am* feeling the need of a few days' change, sweetheart," David admitted, as he drew her down upon the arm of his easy chair. "How would you like to visit the Hiltons for a few days?"

"That would be fine! Are you really thinking of going, dear? The visit would give you a few days of rest and you need it so much."

"Yes, sweetheart, I'm really thinking of going. Could we plan to leave here, say, next Monday morning?"

"But the Monday club?"

"Oh, we can arrange to postpone the meeting for a week."

"Of course I can get ready any time, dear. What a treat it will be to see Gertrude again."

"And to go out on the lake with Tom for black bass. Tom is such a jolly fellow. A few days with him is better than a tonic."

Baldwin was glad that the matter had been arranged without arousing Miriam's suspicions. He had acted his part well. He fell to musing whether other people were driven to the necessity of acting a part in order to save another from calamity or sorrow? Could it be true that men and women were all actors, no one ever knowing the real life of those about him? The thought held him with strange fascination.

The strain already existing in the congregation of the First Church kept increasing to alarming proportions. Other topics of conversation lost their interest in church circles when on the following Sunday it was announced that at the request of the required number of members of the church the Standing Committee issued a call for a church meeting on the Wednesday evening of the week.

"'The purpose of this meeting,'" read the pastor, "'is to consider matters of vital interest to the welfare of the church.'"

What the sermon was about, few of Baldwin's listeners could have told at the close of the service. After the benediction the preacher, with a great heaviness of spirit, withdrew through the church study and set out on a brisk walk. He could not trust himself to meet the people in the foyer of the church as was his usual custom. Could he meet

Miriam without revealing to her the bruised and bleeding condition of his heart? He knew he could not. He was certain that Miriam's eyes had been searching his face of late as if she would know the meaning of the expression he could not always successfully hide.

Two blocks he walked, and two more, turning first down one street and then another.

"Yes, I will call on the Churchills," was his thought as he searched about in his mind for some reasonable excuse to account for his late appearance when he should reach his home. The car soon brought him to Glen Park and a short walk covered the distance to their door.

In this home as at the Hunters', Baldwin always found a restful atmosphere. Affliction and suffering found their compensation in quality of spirit. At the end of a brief call, Baldwin's face wore an expression reflecting a calmer state of mind than when he had entered this humble home. Fortunate the man whose duties bring him in contact with such fountains of healing power! A few minutes later than his usual time of getting home from the morning service, David Baldwin came into Miriam's presence prepared to meet her loving but searching eyes. His burden had been lightened.

During the afternoon, Professor and Mrs. Strong dropped in for a little chat.

"We missed you, dominie, after the service," said Strong, as he shook his pastor's hand. "The

sermon doesn't seem quite complete unless you are at the door, shaking hands with us at its close."

"Of course we can understand how you must have felt," said Mrs. Strong, forgetting for the moment that Miriam knew nothing of the present condition in the affairs of the church. "I was ——"

"And so was I. I was nearly suffocated," interrupted Baldwin. "The church was very close this morning. I got out into the open air as soon as I could."

"Yes," added Strong with a knowing look in his wife's direction. "I too felt the effects of the bad ventilation. We must look into this matter and see if it cannot be remedied."

"Preaching is such energetic work—I do not wonder you want a breath of fresh air as soon as you are through," was Mrs. Strong's comment as she joined the other two actors in keeping Miriam unacquainted with what might do her irreparable injury.

"Has Mr. Baldwin told you?" asked Miriam as the two ladies were chatting. "We are going away for a few days."

"Oh, I am so glad!" exclaimed Mrs. Strong, again forgetting herself.

"Mr. Baldwin's work has been pretty hard and a little rest will do him good," said Miriam.

"Yes," said Mrs. Strong, again getting her bearings. "Mr. Baldwin *does* need a rest. The

change will do him good. It will do you both good."

The slip did not escape Baldwin's ear. Mrs. Strong was not accustomed to weighing her words. Baldwin knew this and sat as it were on pins until they had gone.

When they boarded the 8:30 train the next morning Baldwin heaved a sigh of relief. At last Miriam was safe. The church and Brand and his church-meeting would be left behind.

"Why, good-morning!" said a familiar voice behind him. "Are you going to leave town, too?" The speaker was Miss Appleton. She took the seat opposite. "This is what I call a streak of pure good fortune. I do so dislike to travel alone."

Baldwin could not recall whether he had ever spoken to Miss Appleton about not discussing church matters in the presence of Miriam; and for three hours he kept such a lead on the conversation that Miss Appleton had only one opportunity of introducing the church situation.

"Will you be back for the church-meeting?" she asked, innocently enough.

Baldwin winced. He succeeded in deadening the last part of her question by clearing his throat as the words were being uttered.

"No, Miss Appleton," he replied after he had coughed two or three times thus removing, let us hope, the cause of the irritation, "we shall not return in time for any of the meetings of the church

this week. When a man goes fishing, you know, he cannot be expected to return until he has to."

He wiped the perspiration from his brow and plunged into another hour's continuous talking, not giving Miss Appleton another chance to get near any church topics. When they parted company at Sherman Junction it was with great pleasure that Baldwin assisted the young lady to a seat in the other train.

"Thank heavens!" he exclaimed beneath his breath as he was leaving Miss Appleton's coach. "Now I hope we are safe."

Tom Hilton met them at the station. "Well, well," said he after they had exchanged greetings, "what have they been doing to your husband, Mrs. Baldwin? He has escaped I should say by a pretty close margin."

Miriam was troubled. "He is thin, isn't he? He has been working altogether too hard."

Baldwin's work had not hurt him. Work seldom unfits any man. It's worry that drives men under the sod before their time. Anxiety for the morrow, who does not know its life-destroying power? In David Baldwin's case anxiety had been raised to actual dread of what each succeeding day might unfold. The thought of Miriam's welfare was never long absent from his mind.

At his earliest opportunity he explained the situation to Hilton.

"We will do everything in our power to aid

you. I will caution Mrs. Hilton at once. When did you say this meeting takes place?"

"Wednesday evening."

"And you have no idea what will be the result?"

"Only that Brand usually accomplishes his purpose. I know well enough what his purpose is."

"But your friends in the church, can't they do anything?"

"I have pleaded with them not to get into a church fight. Any organized move on their part would mean a church fight. I have done all in my power to avoid such an issue."

"Well, old man, I don't envy you your state of mind, surely. But it's a good thing that this meeting is going to bring the affair to a climax."

"Yes, God knows I've had this thing hanging over me too long already. But what could I do? I was tied hand and foot."

"If only Mrs. Baldwin had been in her usual health——"

"It would have made all the difference in the world."

"I can believe that. Human hearts were not made to bear their burdens alone."

"You're right. If ever I have the privilege again of sharing all of my problems with Mrs. Baldwin you can count me the happiest man in the state."

"Let us hope that the time is near at hand.

Mrs. Baldwin seems in excellent health physically?"

"She is. Physically she is quite herself again. Her mental recovery has been much slower, however."

"How long was she——" Hilton hesitated for the right word.

"Out of her mind?"

"Yes."

"Several weeks, or eternities, I do not know which. Hilton, I cannot tell you what it was like. It was in some ways a greater blow than death itself. With such an experience behind me, you can image what has been my solicitation to avoid its repetition. With this latest move of Brand's confronting me, it would have been at the peril of her reason for us to have remained in Tioga this week."

"Undoubtedly. And for her sake as well as your own you must keep this church meeting out of your mind as much as you can. Women, and especially wives, have sharp eyes. Do you know, I believe Mrs. Hilton can read me like a book. I very much doubt if I could keep as much of my life from her as you have succeeded in doing from Mrs. Baldwin."

"Hilton, no man knows what he can do until the necessity is laid upon him. God grant that you may never know the necessity for excluding Mrs. Hilton from the chief activities of your life."

Meanwhile Miriam and her friend Gertrude were enjoying each other as only old school friends can.

They had so much to tell each other, so much to talk about. Since their last visit how much had happened!

As Miriam clasped to her heart Gertrude's little babe, nearly the same age as her own would have been had it lived, her mother heart went out in a great yearning for the child she had lost. For a moment she held the little one in her arms. All the suppressed motherhood of her strong nature seemed to flow out toward it. Though she said not a word as she handed the babe to its mother, tears sprang unbidden to each woman's eyes. Gertrude's sympathy thus expressed was more eloquent than words, and Miriam felt its power. Soon a great calm displaced her disquietude. And as they talked the hearts of these two were drawn into yet closer bonds of fellowship.

We may trust David and Miriam to the kind and efficient care of the Hiltons while we return to Tioga. Here ancient Time, who not infrequently plays havoc with the plans of men, sent forth one of his imperial decrees; and in response to the summons the soul of Sylvester Brand took its mysterious departure from the body it had animated these sixty years. On the burial certificate read the words "Heart failure."

On Wednesday morning Baldwin received a telegram from Strong. For a moment and only for a single moment conflicting emotions struggled in his breast for supremacy. For he was human.

Then only sorrow for those in bereavement was in his heart. Though Baldwin was incapable of entertaining consciously an ignoble sentiment, he could not suppress a new and gladsome sense of freedom and relief. He returned to Tioga at once, leaving Miriam to finish her visit with the Hiltons.

The January temperature outside was below the zero mark fully ten degrees. Miriam sat in David's study reading Ibsen while she waited David's return from the annual business meeting of the church. As he came up the steps, she laid aside her book and looked into his eyes as he entered the door.

"What! Still reading Ibsen? He's fine, isn't he? You must read his 'Letters.' I got them only yesterday."

"I like him. He fascinates me and yet—— But tell me about the business meeting. What kind of a meeting did you have?"

"A very unusual meeting, sweetheart."

"Unusual?"

"Yes. For one thing there were many present who had never before attended a business meeting of the church."

"For instance?"

"Well, Professor James was there and Mrs. James, and ——"

"Their presence would give tone to any gathering. Isn't it fine, David, that they are now taking so much interest in your work?"

"Yes, sweetheart, it helps a man to believe in himself when such a man believes in him. Besides Professor and Mrs. James, the Ellwoods were there and for the first time in his life, Dr. Wood was there, Tom Stewart and two of his brothers, Mr. Parker and ——"

"Was Mr. Driver present?"

"Yes. He always attends."

"Did he have anything—anything unpleasant to say, dear?"

"Well, he did have *something* to say," answered David solemnly, avoiding Miriam's penetrating look. "He ——"

"Oh, David, I was so hopeful that the business meetings of the church would be different. Everything has gone on so smoothly since ——"

"But I didn't finish telling you what Mr. Driver said, sweetheart," David interrupted, his face betraying the character of his next sentence. "I said that Mr. Driver had something to say. He made a ten minute speech. And somewhere in his speech he seconded Tom Stewart's motion to increase my salary by one half."

"Oh, David! I am so glad!" cried Miriam winding her arms about his neck and hiding her face on his shoulder.

"What! Does the little girl care so much for the money as all this?" he teased.

"No, no! It's not the money, dearest. It's what such an act means."

"Of course; I understand, sweetheart." For a

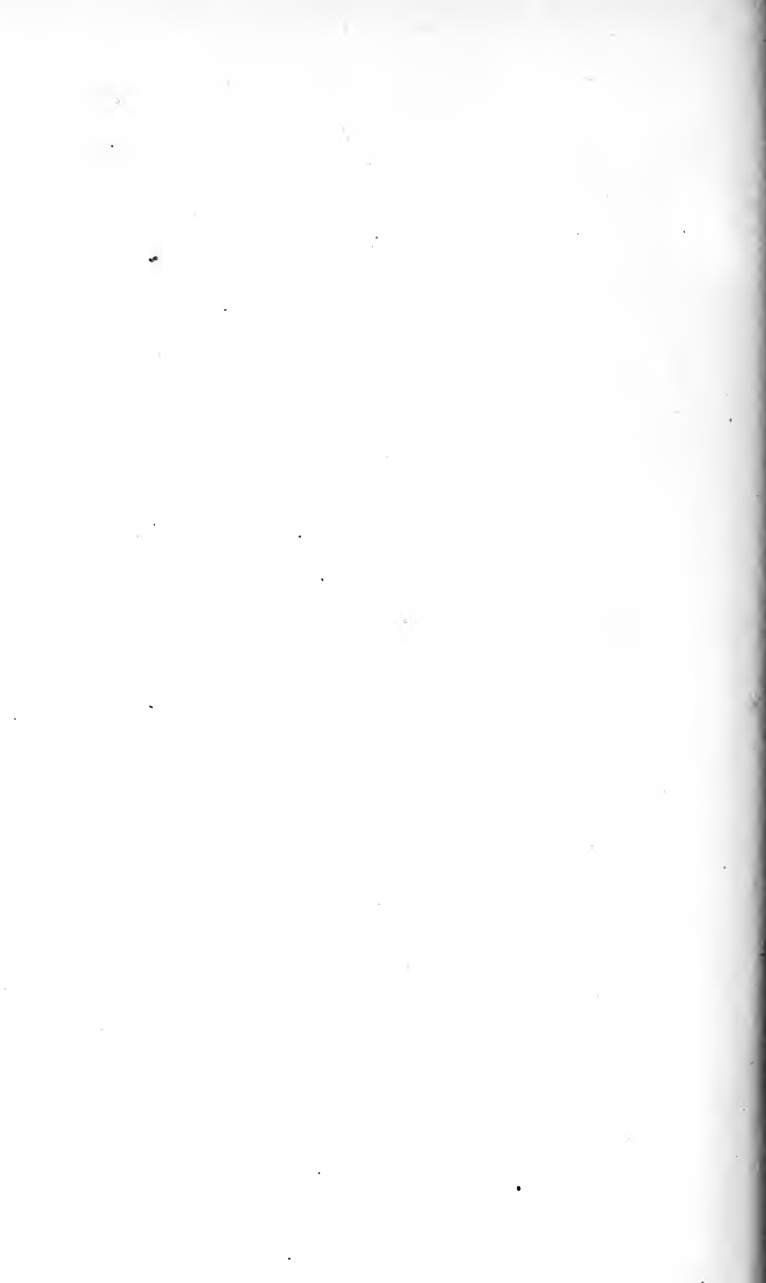
moment he stood holding her to his heart. Into that moment was pressed the joy which should have been his during the weeks and months when sorrow and anxious dread held him within their terrible grasp.

Reverently he lifted his heart in silent prayer. "I thank thee, O God, that thou didst not let me escape from the task for which I was born."

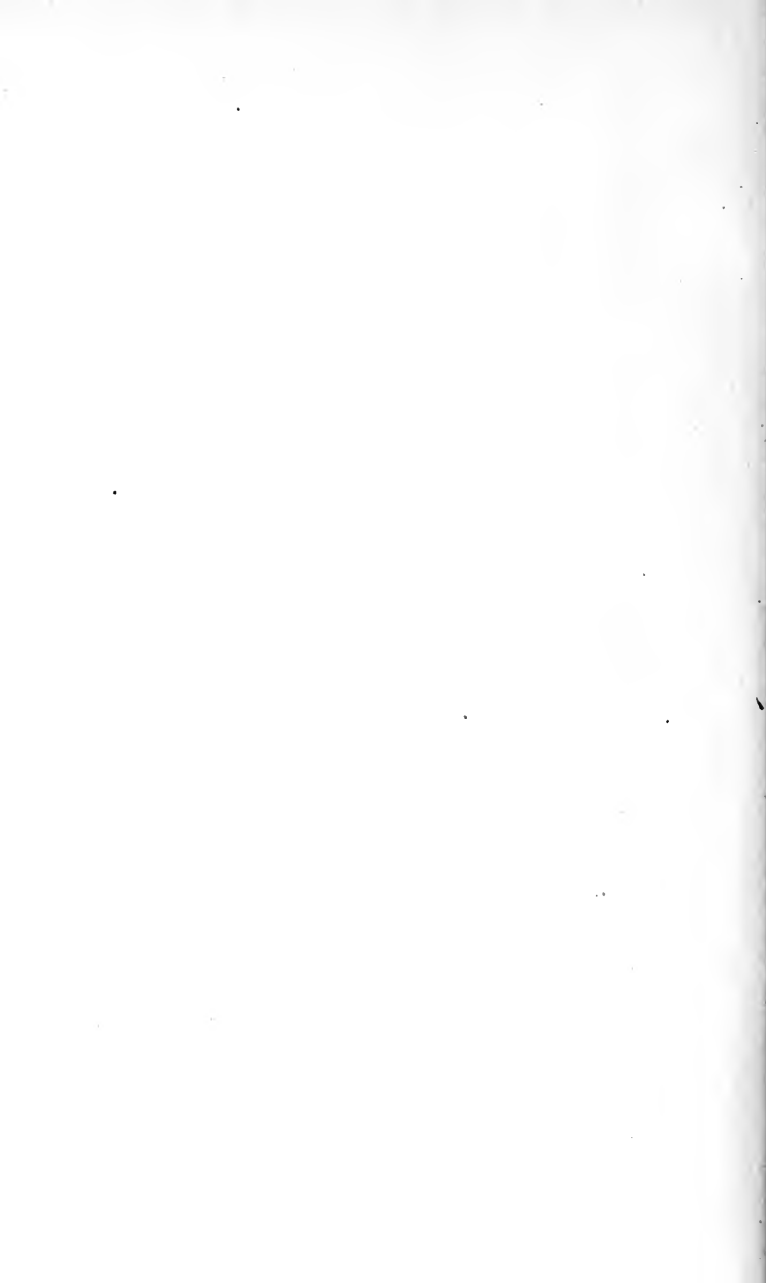
A new era had dawned in the life of the First Church at Tioga. Baldwin, happy and joyous in his work, was freely proclaiming the message of the Christ in terms of modern thought. For a while, in his isolation, he had thought he was standing alone; but as his knowledge of the situation widened he came to know of scores of pulpits in his denomination where the same problem was being worked through.

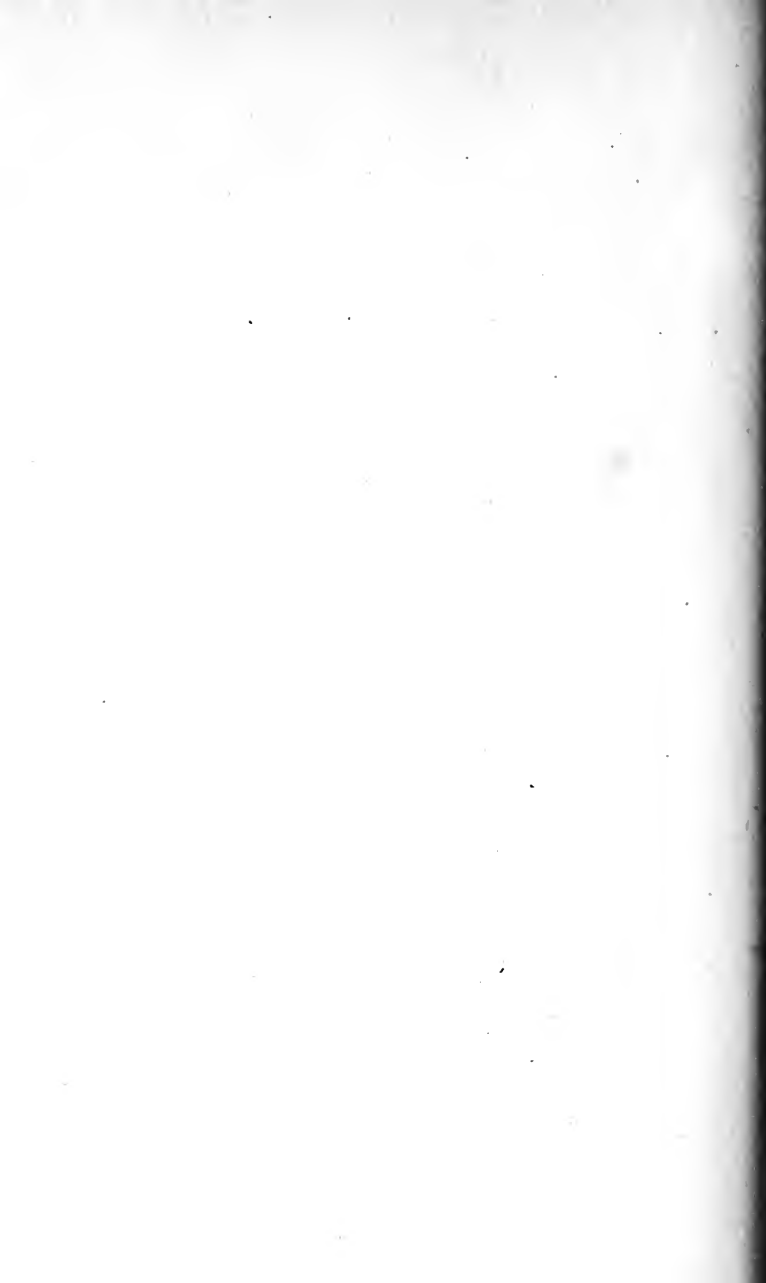
And Miriam? While actively sharing again the labors of her husband, her mental strength being fully restored, she was finding time to fashion anew some dainty little garments, and as she sewed each stitch she breathed a prayer.

THE END









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